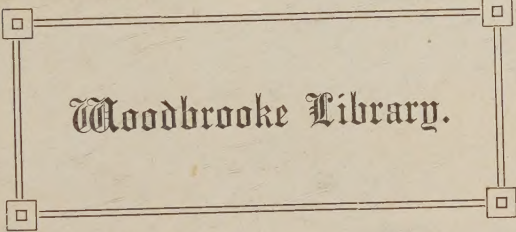


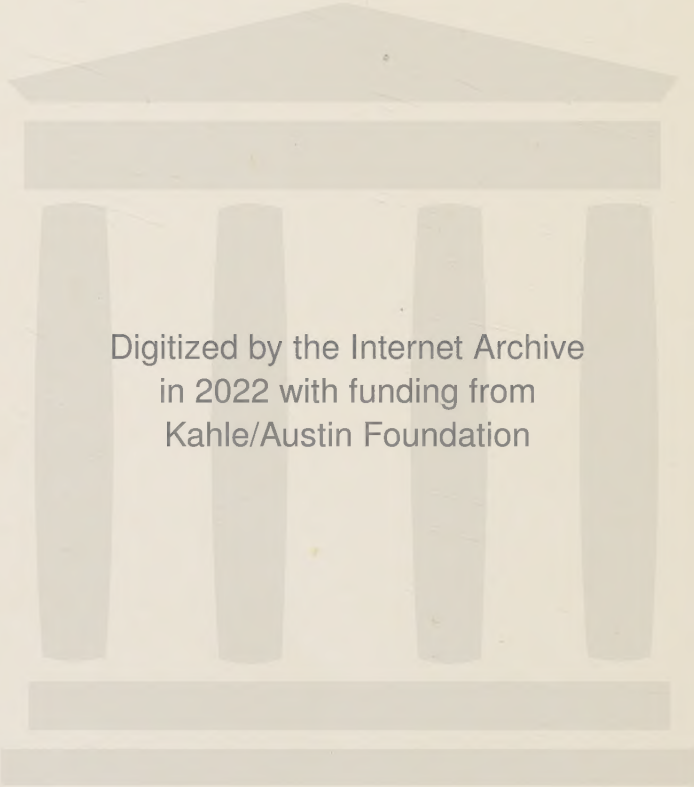
10588

RECORDED BY
WOODBROOKE LIBRARY



Woodbrooke Library.





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

PASCAL:
THE MAN AND THE MESSAGE

BLACKIE & SON LIMITED

50 Old Bailey, LONDON

17 Stanhope Street, GLASGOW

BLACKIE & SON (INDIA) LIMITED

Warwick House, Fort Street, BOMBAY

BLACKIE & SON (CANADA) LIMITED

1118 Bay Street, TORONTO



Pascal

After Philippe de Champagne

P A S C A L :
THE MAN
AND THE MESSAGE

By

ROGER H. SOLTAU, M.A.

Formerly Scholar of Pembroke College, Oxford

BLACKIE & SON LIMITED
LONDON AND GLASGOW

1927

Printed in Great Britain

TO
THE STUDENTS
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
1919-1926

PREFACE

THIS study of Pascal had its origin in a series of lectures delivered to students in the Honours School of French in the University of Leeds, but in its presentation here the theme has been considerably amplified and receives fuller treatment than was possible in these lectures. The standpoint adopted and the scope of the work are explained in the Introduction.

My thanks are due to my father-in-law, the Rev. G. Whelpton, for assistance in the revision of the text and of the proofs. Other acknowledgments will be found in the foot-notes.

ROGER H. SOLTAU.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	xi

BOOK I

THE FRANCE OF PASCAL

I. RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	3
II. THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION	8
III. THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL	14
IV. THE JESUITS	23
V. THE BEGINNINGS OF PORT-ROYAL	29

BOOK II

THE MAN OF SCIENCE

I. EARLY YEARS	43
II. JANSENISM AND SCIENCE	52
III. CONVERSION	65

BOOK III

THE DEFENDER OF PORT-ROYAL

I. THE FIVE PROPOSITIONS	79
II. THE THEOLOGICAL ATTACK	82
III. THE MORAL ATTACK	90

CONTENTS

BOOK IV

THE DEFENDER OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE ORIGIN OF THE <i>Apology</i>	105
II. THE CONTRADICTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE	113
III. RECONCILIATION AND REALITY	122
IV. THE VALUE OF THE <i>Apology</i>	133

BOOK V

THE SAINT

I. PERSONAL RELIGION	153
II. THE LAST YEARS	165
III. PASCAL AND PORT-ROYAL	178
IV. THE END. CONCLUSION	191

APPENDICES

I. PASCAL'S FINAL BREAK WITH PORT-ROYAL	203
II. BIBLIOGRAPHY	210
INDEX	215

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is not for those who are able to go through life untroubled by the problems of human destiny, peacefully taking the world as it is, never knowing the anguish that comes from despair at finding no meaning in the chaos of existence, both around us and in us. Whether we envy those tranquil minds, or rather

. . . prize the doubt
Low souls exist without,

let us admit at once that Pascal has no message for them.

It is to those who, perplexed and anxious, have not yet found the anchor which will keep their souls that we would offer this study of one who fought his way through to peace and certainty, as well as to those who, having already reached the desired goal, would find encouragement and strength in the record of Pascal's struggles and final achievement.

No one will deny that we can be helped by each other's religious experience. It is true that there is in the life of each an innermost recess into which no one may penetrate, not even our nearest and dearest. Physical suffering and ultimate religious experience cannot be shared. "We shall die alone," said Pascal, and to some extent we must live alone too. Nevertheless, the study of the ways of God with one man, of that man's wrestling with God until he had been blessed, may help some one to recognise the ways of God in his own life; and

the solution of the problem of existence suggested by Pascal may be the illumination needed by some struggling pilgrim.

It can nevertheless be asked: Why resuscitate the religious experience of one who has been dead two and a half centuries, who did not speak our language or share our outlook? To this we would answer that in religious experience differences of time and place are really irrelevant. Christianity rests on the assumption of the need of all men for the same God, and for the same deliverance from a self that is much the same all the world over. We admit doubtless that there are genuine differences of religious temperament, and that there are some to whom such as Pascal will never appeal. But it is not because of his being a seventeenth-century Frenchman; it is due to the fact that God's ways with them are not the same as His ways with him, and with many others, of all races and times, whom He may call upon to follow a like path.

Those who may find Pascal helpful are, firstly, those who, troubled by scientific doubt, wish to see how one of the greatest scientific and mathematical minds of all times found in Christianity the peace and enlightenment which he had failed to find in scientific research; and, secondly, those who, dissatisfied with purely intellectual proofs—or disproofs—of religion, *feel* in their innermost souls something that no argument may shake and which nevertheless cannot be simply ascribed to a vague “world spirit”, but needs interpretation in more definite terms.

It is true that in some respects Pascal may cause some to stumble: by his extreme austerity which made him carry asceticism beyond limits compatible with the joyful acceptance of God's goodness to us in the gift of the world around us; by his insistence on Catholic dogma as seen through the eyes of a narrow sect; by the strained character of some of his arguments, which savour too much at times of the mediaeval

schoolmen. But these are but externals and incidentals. In these days, when mysticism is opposed to dogmatic faith, and intelligence to intuition, we may be helped by one who blended a childlike faith with a keen intelligence, mysticism with true rationalism. To all of those who feel that the love of God and man is the real starting-point of all religion, but who despair of ever finding God because their heart is cold, Pascal comes with his message—"Be of good cheer—thou wouldst not seek me if thou hadst not already found me."

This is, however, more than the study of the religious experience of one man. It is impossible to separate the life of Pascal from the destinies of a little body of French Catholics, who stood for the interpretation of Christianity which is associated with the name of Bishop Jansen of Ypres. It was through Jansenist influences that Pascal became a Christian; he was at one time the foremost champion of the Jansenists, and although, as we believe, he was never whole-heartedly one of them and became separated from them towards the end of his life, he never entirely freed himself from their outlook and ways, and, more particularly, was perpetually being driven back, in his thoughts and writings, to the issues involved in the controversies in which they were engaged. No study of Pascal, however superficial, can therefore ignore those problems.

These indeed may appear remote from the problems of our generation; and any fresh account of them seem like the artificial galvanising of dead bones. But this would be a short-sighted judgement. Under archaic formulæ the point at issue was the ever living one of individual moral responsibility and ultimately of the real nature of religion. What is man? What does it mean to be a Christian?—these were the questions that divided the Jansenists from their opponents. Not only Pascal's own contribution to the problem, but the study of the problem as a whole, should be of value to a

generation in which the same issues, under other words, are being discussed in public park and daily paper.

But that is not all. The defeat of Jansenism was not an episode, to be forgotten with the disappearance of the protagonists. It was destined to have a lasting influence on the whole religious history of France. Jansenism, as we shall see, was endeavouring to make a specific contribution to her religious development, to fill up what seemed to be a lacuna in her spiritual life. France would have none of it, and under cover of crushing a heresy destroyed the grain of truth which the heresy contained. That destruction was permanent. The frequent statement that persecution cannot destroy truth is but a comforting illusion. If the repression is ruthless enough, truth can be stamped out, at least for many generations. Protestantism was rooted out of Spain, Italy, and Belgium; Roman Catholicism out of Scandinavia. At any moment we may be repressing some vital religious or social truth, which may not re-emerge for centuries. By crushing out Jansenism the French Catholic Church deprived itself of an essential moral element which nothing could replace, or has replaced; she remained as permanently impoverished by the destruction of Port-Royal as by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The account of those events should not be devoid of interest and relevancy to our own day and generation.

BOOK I
THE FRANCE OF PASCAL

CHAPTER I

Religion and Politics in the Seventeenth Century

“THE seventeenth century, as I see it, is a Doctor of Theology first of all; it is also, from the point of view of the human mind, the most shining point in History.

“The same century is alone the father of Sciences, the creator of that great Modern Science of which we are so proud to-day. Since then, we have improved, applied, refined; but it created everything, and, if we dare so speak, in the scientific order all things were made by it, and without it was not anything made that was made. There came at that time, as it were, an inspiration of the Word for the advent of Science. And in addition to being the most accurate, the most complete of theological centuries, the seventeenth century was the greatest without compare of literary centuries.”

Such a view may at first seem strange to any one used to think of the wars and diplomacy of Richelieu, of the pomp and circumstance of Versailles. And yet, in our own history, religion forms the background of almost every seventeenth-century political problem; scientific discovery offers the names of Sir Christopher Wren and Newton, literature those of Milton and Bunyan, while in other countries we find Galileo, Grotius, Spinoza, Leibnitz. To any one, therefore, who looks beneath the surface of things it will soon become

apparent that Father Gratry's definition was no paradox. The seventeenth century was indeed an age of religious and scientific passion, an age of ardent quest for truth in all spheres of human thought.

In no individual career was this passion for truth more complete than in Pascal. At the same time the most profound thinker, the greatest prose writer and perhaps the greatest scientist that France has produced, he may be said to incarnate Gratry's definition of the seventeenth century—Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Science, and without compare in literature.

There are probably few great men in whose lives the political and social background matters so little. Only one of Pascal's works, the *Provincial Letters*, is really determined by time and place. He moves in the realm of thought, not action; his views on the passing problems of his time are in many ways the least original and interesting part of his work.

And yet the fundamental problems with which his mind and soul grappled could not but be coloured by the circumstances of his day and generation; they gave to the controversies in which he was involved their particular form and setting. His mental processes were also those of his age, so that some sketch of his times is necessary to an understanding of the man.

All periods are, in a sense, and at some points, ages of transition. The life of Pascal, more particularly the years of his manhood, belongs to that part of the seventeenth century when in France the modern State was being definitely built up on the ruins of the mediaeval order. By modern State we mean, for France, firstly absolutism based on centralisation—a system which changes of regime have subsequently altered surprisingly little—and, what is more important, the definite acceptance of the State as an ultimate end, superior

to, and independent of, the Church or Ethics, forming a law unto itself, claiming from its members an obedience subject to no higher loyalty, political and spiritual.

The chief artisan of this edifice was Richelieu. By one of those paradoxes, it was a Prince of the Church who was finally to establish the principle that religion, and even morals, stop short of politics. It may be questioned whether any statesman has ever exceeded him in rigid, cold, ambitionless unscrupulousness: it is another paradox that Bismarck, a reincarnation of Richelieu, should have been a devout Lutheran Evangelical.

The essence of Richelieu's work was that everything must be destroyed which might seem either to claim a minute share of the authority that belongs to the king alone, or to form an obstacle to the spread of that authority: whether Church, corporation, class, everything must bow before the king's law. The Jacobin idea of France as one and indivisible was but the echoing of the Cardinal's policy. Everything was to be eliminated which might come between the individual subject and his king's representative.

A rigid external uniformity was the logical concomitant of his policy. Richelieu carried it through in the administrative sphere. He failed to be consistent, in that he did not eliminate Protestantism. We should like to think this was owing to a true spirit of toleration; we fear that it was only because the Protestant Church of the period was too much engrossed in its re-organisation after the wars of religion to oppose the Cardinal's schemes. In fact, its assertions of unconditional loyalty to a political system that was the negation of every Christian principle is a painful feature of seventeenth-century Protestantism. But Richelieu did not stop short at administration, or indeed at any department of human activity. Literature was to be favoured so as to become a powerful aid and weapon;

everything was to be encouraged that helped to weld France into one solid block in which the royal will would be law.

It need hardly be said that this work would have been impossible without the support of public opinion. Of course its formal expression was not asked for; the local organs that might have been its spokesmen were held in check, often destroyed. But, in the main, conscious France was behind the Cardinal. For political liberty she cared little yet; the restriction of the privileges of parliament or nobility did not worry her, and, as we shall see, she whole-heartedly approved his policy of mental and philosophical conformism.

The fundamental reason for this universal acceptance of despotism and uniformity is that in France, as everywhere else, there was only one real problem, that of religion. This is not the place to discuss how far in all times the religious problem may really underlie all so-called political, economic, and social questions: it certainly does so in our period. If France accepted Richelieu, it is because she was weary of wars of religion; in fact, because she was weary of religion itself, except as a useful background for political authority.

In the numerous comparative studies of English and French history there is here a point of difference which has not, we believe, received adequate attention. One of the results of the Reformation was, as we all know, to deprive religion of its really Catholic character. Not only were the Reformation Churches in most cases national in organisation and outlook, but in those countries that remained faithful to Rome, the Catholic Church, having mainly owed her survival to the royal favour, passed more completely under State control than before, and her branches thus became virtually national Churches.

It is, however, one thing to give a Church a national status, and another to make such a Church the handmaid of the State. Elizabeth and the earlier Stuarts attempted the latter

and failed for two reasons. The first was the existence of large numbers of Christians—Catholics and dissenters—who, being outside the State Church, could not be dictated to and could not be fitted into the scheme of a religion subordinate to State interests. The second was that the very existence of this “non-conformist” element enabled the established Church to stiffen its resistance to royal encroachments and to establish an independence from secular authority which can scarcely be understood by those who only know what establishment meant in Germany or France. It may be further noticed that this failure to harness religion to the State meant the ultimate failure of absolutism. No real autocracy was possible without the theory of the divine right of kings as its basis; no such theory could be vindicated without a subservient Church. The independence of the Church and political liberty were thus indissolubly connected.

But what had failed in England succeeded in France. Protestantism was first cajoled by “toleration” into absolute political obedience, and later ruthlessly suppressed; Jansenism was crushed, and later on Quietism, as would have been also any other movement that threatened to win over any important number of people capable of forming an “opposition Church”. Meanwhile the Church was being brought under the complete control of the State; the very existence of the Altar was being bound up with that of the Throne; obedience to the king was being identified with obedience to God, and the process was complete. Richelieu had well laid the foundations, on which Mazarin and Louis XIV. built, of the servile Church in the autocratic State.

CHAPTER II

Renaissance and Reformation

THE period with which we are engaged is the first stage of this process, the identification of the religion of the established Church—in this case Catholicism—with secular authority.

Public opinion was but too disposed to acquiesce. The country had just emerged from half a century of religious wars, and most people were weary beyond words of what was to them an unnecessary and foolish struggle. A public opinion indifferent to the real religious issue, and only wanting peace, had ultimately supported the Catholic party on the ground that the other side no longer having any chance of winning, the success of the Catholic party had best come about as quickly as possible. Peace at any price, internal order under any conditions, meant acceptance of the religion that seemed most likely to bring peace. And so Henry IV. became a Catholic and order was restored.

The wars of religion thus ended in the rejection of Protestantism by France. It is easy to say that because this happened, it was therefore bound to happen; but we cannot accept this determinist simplification of history. Catholicism won because, faced with the great decision of remaining Catholics or becoming Protestants, the majority of sixteenth-century Frenchmen chose the former. France remained a Catholic country, because the majority of her children,

who might have become Protestant quite as well as those of England, Scotland, Saxony, chose not to take the new road.

This was by no means a foregone conclusion. Between 1530 and 1540 there was, to say the least, an even chance that France might make the venture.¹ A little more courage on the part of a number of prominent people, less ruthlessness in persecution, more moderation on the part of the reformers—by which we mean less violence of speech, a more really Christian way of stating the problem and of refuting their enemies, but not a whittling down of their principles—and particularly royal support instead of royal disfavour—these might have turned the scale. And why should not royal favour be forthcoming? Were not a number of European princes champions of the new faith? A sorry company of “Fidei defensores” doubtless; and which would not have been disgraced by the addition of one whom Dr. Stubbs describes as “occupying an unenviable primacy among the worst kings of France”.

If Francis I., after much hesitation, set his face against the new beliefs, it was not, we may be sure, for any reasons that did much credit to the Church of his fathers. Whereas Henry VIII. saw in the Reformation a way of loosening irksome conjugal bonds, Francis mainly saw the moral rigidity of Calvinism. “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered: ‘Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee’.” The convenient season never came to Francis any more than to Felix.

Apart from those less honourable causes, the French seem

¹ “In the middle of the sixteenth century, France only just missed becoming Protestant (*a failli devenir protestante*)”. (Strowski, *Pascal et son temps*, i. p. 1.) (Professor Strowski, to whose work frequent reference will be made, is a Roman Catholic.)

to have clung to their Church for three main reasons. They found in it a deeper satisfaction of the mystical side of their religious needs, repelled by the extreme intellectualism and external bareness of Calvinism; they shrank from the sin of schism, being, then as now, gregarious in the extreme and more than reluctant to take a strongly individual line of action; and, lastly but chiefly, they saw in the new faith something ultimately incompatible with the aspirations of the national consciousness.

The fact is that for Protestantism to win France it had to come swiftly and almost irresistibly, as it did in England, sweeping away the old Church before she had time to organise her resistance. As soon as it became evident that there would be a party of Catholic defence and that this party would have official support, the majority of Frenchmen felt unable to face the political consequences of a real struggle to the finish. Protestants became rebels, Catholicism became identified with the established order, and the victory of Protestantism would mean the disruption of a painfully acquired and still fragile national unity. It has been said that in her desire for national unity, France refused to face the religious issues of the Reformation, and there undoubtedly was a virtually universal tendency to look upon the social and collective aspect of the religious problem rather than upon the strictly individual or spiritual.¹

The rejection of Protestantism, essentially negative, and perhaps we may say instinctive rather than rational, had however left altogether unsolved the problem of the causes of the Reformation itself. These causes had now to be removed, and the task of the seventeenth century was to give satisfaction

¹ The "Politiques" are described by Tavannes in his memoirs as men "who preferred the repose of the kingdom to the salvation of their souls and would rather the kingdom remained at peace without God than at war for Him." (Quoted by Pollard, *Political History of England*, 1558-1603, p. 113.)

to those who, while remaining in the Church, were nevertheless profoundly uneasy and restless, and were still demanding the satisfaction of needs which neither Protestantism nor sixteenth-century Catholicism had really met.

The seventeenth-century religious problem cannot therefore be understood without the realisation of those needs. These were, in a sense, not primarily religious—or at least not directly so. Those who had come to reject Catholic dogmas or Catholic ritual had usually found in Lutheran or Calvinistic beliefs and modes of worship an adequate expression of their doctrinal and devotional aspirations. The immediate “abuses” which, particularly in Germany, had brought so many to Protestantism, had been, or were being, remedied by the Council of Trent. But behind all this there remained still unsolved a deeper question, which was going to dominate the seventeenth century, namely the relation of the Renaissance to religion.

It is constantly said that the Reformation was the carrying of the Renaissance spirit of inquiry into the sphere of religion. Now it may be true that without the Renaissance there would have been no Reformation, and that to some people the Protestant churches proved to be a sort of half-way houses between Catholic orthodoxy and free thought; but in its essentials the Reformation should be looked upon as the protest of an outraged Christian conscience against the apparent permeation, political and religious, of the Catholic Church by the heathen Renaissance. As Professor Strowski says,¹ “Christian sentiment in the sixteenth century is the discovery of a Christian conscience”.

Of what, after all, was the Renaissance the rebirth? Of pre-Christian points of view. In its desire to retrieve what was good in pre-Christian civilisation, it welcomed at the same time the very things against which Christianity had been a

¹ Strowski, *Pascal*, i. p. 3.

revolt; and became a restoration of Paganism in art, morals, and philosophy. It proclaimed the dogma of art for art's sake; it rejected Christian morality as a check on "nature"; it went back to the Ancients for their interpretation of the world. It was an assertion of man and man's powers, as against God's; it was in essence the negation of all that Christianity had hitherto stood for. It was above all, as Dr. Gooch has said, "a revolt against the ages of faith".¹

It goes without saying that the true nature of the movement did not appear at once, and that many failed to recognise it; and it need scarcely be added that there was much in Paganism that could be salvaged with profit. The rediscovery of beauty as a divine gift, the fresh explorations that were made into the physical universe, the questioning of certain conventions, were all a clear gain. The revival of learning, the invention of printing, the stimulation of human thought—of all these it can be said that no fuller knowledge of the world could in itself be in final opposition to the search for God.

But man was unable to stand the heady draughts of all those discoveries; he began to believe in himself, his unaided powers, his unenlightened wisdom, and we get fifteenth-century Italy, representing, we trust, the lowest depths to which a professedly Christian civilisation can fall. The Borgia popes and Machiavelli, the shutting out of all Christian standards while keeping the structure and labels of Christian society: these were the Renaissance.

Had the Church seen the danger, and done anything to prevent it, the good alone of the new movement might have been retained. The Renaissance would then have had its religious manifestation in a reformation within the Church, which would have satisfied the greater part of those who were

¹ *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 565.

later to tread the new path. But the Church did little or nothing; she allowed her moral teaching to be flouted by her own leaders, she proclaimed her infallibility to those who pointed out her failings, she allowed the deadly divorce between the secular and the religious, between the ethical and the artistic, between politics and religion, between individual and national morality.

The message of the early Reformers was, therefore, quite as much as a theological revolt, a protest against this surrender of moral ideals by the Church. It was largely the fact of that surrender that made the Reformers, in trying to explain it, question some of the axioms on which Catholicism rested. Protestantism was thus, to a very large extent at any rate, a call to arms to all who cared for Christianity and were not prepared to see fifteen centuries of Christian civilisation jeopardedised by the onslaught of a subtly disguised Paganism.

As is usual in any movement of reaction—and Protestantism was largely a reaction, an attempt to go back to primitive Gospel Christianity, rather than a movement forward—Protestantism went too far. It was inevitable, perhaps, that some of the good as well as the evil of the Church should be condemned, that practices should be abandoned, just because they were Catholic, irrespectively of their intrinsic value; inevitable also that the cause of religious reform should become mixed with alien questions, political and social. Be that as it may, the Protestant party in the Wars of Religion became something very different from the movement of pure religious Reformation represented by Calvin, and its defeat, as we say, was due to many causes not of a religious character.

CHAPTER III

The Catholic Revival

THE Wars of Religion over, and the crisis surmounted, the Church began to look for the real causes of the revolt and to see whether these could be dealt with in such a way as to remove the possibility of another upheaval and secession. The leaders of the counter-Reformation did not fail to see how far Protestantism had been an ethical revolt, a manifestation of the human conscience as much as of the human intellect. But before they had really been able to face the situation, they had to meet, particularly in France, a fresh onslaught of Renaissance paganism under various forms, from the appearances of religion to the boldest denial. Paganism under several names—Stoicism, Scepticism, Libertinism—was going to attack Christianity at its very centre.

The upshot of the wars of religion had been to make people afraid of taking religion seriously. Under cover of "peace" people meant indifference. If indeed, as St. Cyres says, "most good Frenchmen had made up their minds that never again should dogma endanger the public peace",¹ this could only be secured by agreeing to ignore all the vital elements in religion, by honouring it in outward observance but never letting it become dangerously serious. It must not be allowed to interfere with a man's private affairs, and particularly not

¹ St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 68.

with public life. France might be ruled by a Prince of the Church, but perhaps never in her history was the divorce more complete between ethics and politics; never was the life of the State more completely secularised. The watchword of the period was “*μηδὲν ἄγαν*”—no excess, no enthusiasm. Affirm as little as possible and deny nothing.

In the ecclesiastical sphere, this secularism involved the strict control of the Church by the State. Fear of Roman influences meant a jealous watch over the Church by Royal officials, the defence by French lawyers of the “liberties of the Gallican Church”. It was also to mean the deep distrust of any keen reform movement—Huguenot, Jansenist, Jesuit, all were equally to be watched; they must not be allowed to re-awaken enthusiasm, passion, quarrels. In fine, any body who was liable to take religion seriously was by that very fact suspect to the defenders of public order.

The intellectual translation of this attitude to religion was of course the rigid separation between religion and real life, between faith and reason. Since Christianity must not be discussed—much less acted upon—the human mind, incapable of feeding on negations, had to devise some other faith; hence the rise of the “lay religion” which heralds Voltaire and in which Pascal was to see the real foe to Christianity.

This “lay religion” took three main forms. It began by being a return to the Renaissance insistence on nature; it then received its philosophy with Descartes and later, abandoning both the Renaissance and Descartes, it increasingly became what it really was, a logical and honest denial of Christianity.

“There were many people in France, usually of high education, serious-minded, who did not share the mystical unrest of their times. They were not tormented by religious feelings. Nourished on Antiquity, they were governed by a

lofty and clear conception of human dignity and of duty. While following the religion of the State and believing God should receive homage, they only gave Him half their lives, and half their mind. For the rest they were sufficient unto themselves.

“The Reformation had begun by attracting them; but it soon frightened them. They did not care for a faith that caused such upheaval of soul, such a fever of conversion. Also, this newly arrived Reformation brought rebellion and civil war. At the same time Catholicism was purging itself of the disorders that had lost to it so many noble souls; it was becoming a State religion. It was largely the defection of this élite that checked the progress of the Reformation in France.

“In the middle of the prevailing disorder these needed something to which to anchor their souls against anarchy, passion, fear of death. Religion was itself the cause of the troubles, it did not seem to supply a basis for action. The times were not unlike those of the decline of the Roman Republic, of the reign of Nero and Caligula—the philosophy of Cato, of Brutus, of Seneca would not be out of place. Stoicism came to life again, not a dilettante pursuit but really for service and action.”¹

The vogue of Epictetus is one of the most interesting phenomena of the period. Several translations appeared in the latter half of the sixteenth century, at first in Protestant circles but very soon in Catholic also. The University of Louvain became the chief centre of Neo-stoic propaganda, largely through Lipsius, who was a pure rationalist. (Curiously enough, as we shall see, Jansenism, the very negation of Stoicism, was born in the same university.) From Louvain Neo-stoicism spread to France through the writings of du Vair,

¹ Strowski, *Pascal*, i. pp. 26-28.

whose works went through fifteen editions in fifty years and represent a curious attempt at giving a purely rational basis to Christian morals. He had a horror of dogma, which divides men, and preached the unifying effect of duty based on a purely rational morality. He accepted outward conformity to "the ancient ceremonies of one's country, with a decent moderation void of excess or avarice", but made man place his chief reliance on himself. Help from above we do not need. "If there is any truth more necessary than another, it is that our will is free," and "it is a holy and inviolable maxim, established since the beginning of the world, that if we would possess any good we must acquire it for ourselves." All of which is echoed in the earlier tragedies of Corneille, particularly *Cinna* and *Horace*.

Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers,

says Augustus, a true Neo-stoic.

However heathen in inspiration, the Neo-stoicism of du Vair was intensely moral in its outlook and appeal and was in many ways a reaction against the unethical character of official Catholicism. The easier teaching of Epicure also made a wide appeal, particularly as transmitted to his day and generation by Montaigne in his Essays.

Montaigne has been happily defined as "an Epicurean with a Stoic imagination" and in his Essays we have, in its purest form, that rationalisation of Christianity, that appeal to the natural wisdom of the Ancients, to the common sense of the unaided human reason, which is the essence of the Renaissance and the very negation of revealed religion. The popularity of Montaigne and his influence in intellectual and even fashionable circles, are an indication of the spread of this decorous and even somewhat timid rationalism.

Then came Descartes, who gave to that rationalism its

philosophical and scientific basis. In spite of "his polite bow" to Christianity he is fundamentally anti-Christian. "His mind is not Christian; he forges for himself temporary morals; he seeks for metaphysical truths as if they were not to be found in religion, which he places in a corner of his mind, without taking it out either to use it or to attack it. Religion is for him a mechanical belief in dogmas and practices; it does not lie at the foundation of philosophy, morals, everything."¹ Although some short-sighted Catholics saw in him an ally, in that he upheld metaphysical evidence for the existence of an abstract supreme Being, his true antagonism to the Christian religion as something revealed was realised by Pascal, who saw in him a serious foe.

And Descartes, feeling the need for some "provisional morality", pending the completion of his study of man, adopts principles which are really Stoical—"to obey the laws of God and man, to be as resolute and steadfast as possible in all actions, and to follow steadily such opinions as he had determined to act upon, to vanquish self rather than fortune, and to seek to alter his desires rather than the order of the world".²

It was inevitable that this natural philosophy should after a while lead its adherents outside the limits of even an outward and formal acceptance of Christian practice. "Libertinism", the denial of any objective morality, of any positive beliefs, grew rapidly in the seventeenth century. Neo-stoicism might appeal to the keen strong souls, to alert consciences—but not to everybody. Many came out of the wars of religion tired of life itself, fearful of mental strife, and only anxious to live with the least possible effort. There were few avowed atheists—the penalties were too severe. Fontainier was burnt in 1621, Vanini, a much abler man, had suffered the

¹ Giraud, *Blaise Pascal*, p. 11.

² Strowski, *Pascal*, i. p. 114.

same fate in 1619. But the real prophet of virtual atheism was Pierre Charron, whose *Wisdom* was, between 1615 and 1635, the handbook of Libertinism. Charron was a priest, and had probably no intention of spreading unbelief. His endeavour was mainly to sum up in convenient and clear form the essentials of the new philosophy of the age. He largely copied Montaigne and du Vair. Only he was not content with Neo-stoicism. He does not believe it is powerful enough to dissolve prejudice, passions, dogmas. So he appeals to another Greek philosopher and expounds the scepticism of Pyrrho. After all, we really know nothing. Nearly all opinions commonly received are false and harmful. "Vox populi, vox stultorum." Even the wise are apt to be carried away. Especially must religion be kept out of the search after wisdom. This is to be found in man alone. "Whereas some people see in religion the source of all good, it is on the contrary a very special, distinct virtue; it can exist without virtue, as it did in the Pharisees, who were religious and wicked; virtue can exist without it, as many people are good and virtuous while being irreligious."¹ Charron goes further—having divorced religion from goodness, he divorces it from God. God exists, but is not to be found in "superstitions"; nor does He want worship other than of the mind. Charron is the apostle of pure Theism.

There is still some dignity in this philosophy—but there was none in the mass of literature that only took in these staid writers their negations, their denial of the real foundations for goodness, and ignored their nobler side. When you have been told by Charron that to go against your nature is to tempt God, there is not much left of individual effort towards morality. The Renaissance had done its work thoroughly; the France of Richelieu had become also the France of Mon-

¹ Strowski, *Pascal*, i. p. 187.

taigne; and a Catholic writer has stated that "hardly any one outside the Protestant Church had then any real piety".¹

The conflict between avowed unbelief and Christianity was of course patent; it was more important to grasp truly the more subtle discrepancy between Christianity and Stoicism. The spread of the Neo-stoic philosophy would have meant the decay of Christian sentiment; a "stoicised" Catholic might still conform, but soon lost what really made Christianity—any sense of wretchedness and helplessness, any need for grace, any desire for internal renewal. He might become what Strowski calls Montaigne, "the most Catholic and the least Christian of men".²

Such was the formidable attack that the Church had to meet, when she had barely recovered from the onslaught of the wars of religion. Her counter-attack has scarcely been studied adequately as yet. We need not dwell over the reforms carried out by the Council of Trent: the removal of some flagrant abuses, the re-defining of doctrine. Those, after all, touched but the structure: they might have remained a dead letter had there not been a spirit to make those dry bones live, a true revival of Catholic religion. That spirit was the very same which had created Protestantism, it was "a need of the soul, in which alone lies the ultimate interpretation of history".³

This revival was really the result—one of the most important and interesting results—of the Reformation. "The Reformation had, with incomparable force, re-awakened the craving for a personal and living way of belief and thought, as opposed to the mere repetition of formulae and comments on them."⁴ The first half of the seventeenth century witnessed a real explosion of Catholic faith and propaganda, which manifested itself in a great number of ways.

¹ Strowski, *Saint François de Sales*, p. 38.

² Strowski, *Pascal*, i. p. 124.

³ Strowski, *Pascal*, i. p. 2.

⁴ St. Cyres, *Cambridge Modern History*, iv. p. 776.

While the defence of the faith itself was being reorganised by new religious orders, particularly the Congregation of the Oratory, and that of St. Sulpice, the social application of Christianity was receiving a new development in the work of St. Vincent de Paul with the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity, who were giving themselves up to work among the poor and humble in town and country. The distress caused by wars, maladministration, and civil strife was alleviated by that great apostle.

Nor was this work confined to the clergy. St. Vincent de Paul himself appealed to laymen for help in his evangelistic and charitable work, and there soon grew up numerous guilds and organisations of laymen such as the "Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament" which had branches all over France. That the maintenance of political stability was not unconnected with the work of this powerful body does not invalidate its value and interest as a beneficent agent of Catholic faith and as evidence of the ground regained by the Church among the upper middle class from which the Guild was recruited.

The religious spirit which animated all this is best expressed in the work of St. François de Sales, who, standing outside the various theological parties and the rival organisations, shows at its highest the devotional spirit which Catholicism could offer against the growth of Protestantism or the attacks of unbelief. Of St. François no one could say that he minimised the purely religious aspect of any problem, and, in his anxiety not to cheat Caesar, failed to render to God the things which were His. No Puritan was more strict against sin while keeping love for sinners; never was there a spiritual director more severe when severity was called for, more tender with the bruised reed. Theologically he seems to have taken the best from the various warring creeds or interpretations of creeds, and was really "the rich fountain of living water whence

sprang all religious feeling of the seventeenth century before it divided itself into a multiplicity of diverse currents. The founder of the religion of the heart and of direct faith, he opened the way for Pascal.”¹

¹ Stapfer, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 15, 1908.

CHAPTER IV

The Jesuits

IT was not long, however, before the unity of this Catholic revival was broken and internal strife appeared. And, curiously enough, the occasion of it all was the very body which, in the eyes of many, was the chief artisan of the counter-Reformation and of the subsequent Catholic revival—the Society of Jesus.

Before we come to the actual problems of which it became the storm-centre, it must be remembered that, in France, the order suffered from its foreign origin and from its control by a foreign General. The Jesuits were also specially under the order of the Pope. They were, therefore, suspect from the national point of view, and they were looked upon with disfavour by all the national Gallican elements within the Church. Further, their great influence awoke many jealousies and hostilities. Their virtual monopoly of secondary education—a monopoly obtained by the sheer excellence of their methods and the efficiency of their scholastic administration—awoke professional jealousies and made many wonder whether the Society was not, in many ways, acquiring a power in excess of what was in the true interest of the Church. War had just been made against the Protestants for trying to establish a virtual rival to the State; many wondered whether the Society would

not also one day have to be resisted for trying to establish yet another "imperium in imperio".

Those, however, were but general tendencies and might have long remained undefined had it not been for the fact that the Jesuits introduced into the Catholic revival elements that were going to bring about a storm.

In endeavouring to defend Christian dogma against the attacks of free thought in all its forms, they deliberately adopted towards non-Christian forces an attitude entirely different from that hitherto taken by Catholics and Protestants alike. Lutherans, Calvinists, the Council of Trent had all endeavoured to meet the negations of unbelief by a rigid definition of orthodox dogma. They had not endeavoured in any sense, to water down Christianity, to make Christian practice too easy, to bridge over the abyss which lay between revelation and the unaided reason of man. They believed that such an attitude was the only one compatible with a belief in objective truth, in a holy God, in an unbending moral law. They did not think that any useful end could be gained by minimising differences, by making Christianity fit the modern mind. They would have echoed the utterance of the contemporary writer¹ who said that "what the modern mind wanted was not so much to be asked what it wanted to believe as to be told what it was wanted to believe".

The Jesuits, on the other hand, saw in this attitude a two-fold error: firstly, a neglect of the possible measure of truth to be found in the new discoveries in thought and science, secondly, an unnecessary widening of the gulf between the Church and the world. Further, they believed that the world was ready for a re-definition of the nature of God and His attitude towards man. They were, in a word, "the Modernists of the counter-Reformation. . . . Rather than restrict them-

¹ R. A. Knox, *Some Loose Stones* (a reply to *Foundations*).

selves to any definite ethical code, they preferred to range at will among the Doctors of the Church in their search for the elements of a practical and flexible moral theology.”¹

This new attitude towards the world they expressed both in thought and in action ; in action, by the development of casuistry; in thought, by their adoption of the theology of Molina.

Casuistry was nothing new, it had existed from the very day in which for the first time an individual had had to adapt a rigid abstract principle to a difficult situation. But the Jesuits now gave it an extension which caused the widespread belief, among many of the most sincere Catholics, that they were teaching a relaxed morality, altering principles to suit circumstances and sapping the bases of any moral law. Their endeavour was to bring into the Church many whom too rigid a practice might have driven away, not to put before the new convert too unrealisable an ideal. This facilitating of Christian virtue they carried out by a double device; by “omission”, *i.e.* accepting as lawful whatever is not expressly forbidden; and by “probabilism”, which is the adoption, among several courses of action of varying strictness, of any one which has for it a measure of “probability” of its being orthodox. They further declared that the sanction given to it by any *one* doctor of theology sufficed to make an opinion “probable” and therefore safe to be acted upon. There were, therefore, no rigid, hard and fast ethical rules, but only a series of possible lines of action, none wholly wrong, but possessing varying degrees of probable rightness.

In theology, the problem of the Jesuits was how to deal, not with the man who wanted an easy road to Christianity, but with the Stoic, who, reluctant to abandon his boasted spiritual independence, the captaincy of his soul, could not admit the

¹ Ogg, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 342.

inadequacy of the natural human will and the necessity of divine grace in the religious life, particularly when this was stated in terms of predestinationism.

Stripping the problem of all but its bare essentials, it is enough to remind the reader that Christianity rests on two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, that unaided, and without divine grace, man is unable to achieve his own salvation either from sin in this life or from what might be the penalties of sin in the life to come. Secondly, that man is nevertheless free to choose between good and evil and is therefore responsible for his conduct, however circumstances may act as a partial excuse or alleviation of that responsibility. These two principles are not mutually exclusive or mutually complementary. They must both be true if Christianity is not to be either superfluous, by making revelation and grace unnecessary, or based on injustice by the passing of condemnation on irresponsible beings.

Ever since Christian theology took birth there has been a tendency to exaggerate one of these truths at the expense of the other. Whenever a problem of this kind is discussed, it is unavoidable that the antagonists should turn back to some previous period when the same problems were before men's minds; and we shall find that the seventeenth-century thinkers turn back largely to the fifth and sixth centuries, when for the first time the problem of free will became acute. It was about the year 400 when the monk Pelagius came out with a doctrine which made divine grace almost seem superfluous. "Man", he said, "was created by God good, and can remain good by his own efforts. He is master of his destinies. He is therefore absolutely responsible for his doings; but, of course, divine grace and redemption become unnecessary."

The opposite attitude was promptly taken by St. Augustine, who insisted upon the depravity of man, and the absolute need

for divine grace, as well as on the fact that such grace, necessary as it was, was evidently not granted to all men, since obviously otherwise all men would be saved. Ultimately the will of man was not absolutely free. There was, therefore, a certain measure of predestination, and logically a certain diminution of individual responsibility.

Several centuries later, an attempt was made by St. Thomas Aquinas to reconcile, if one may so put it, the Pelagian and Augustinian standpoint, securing both freedom of will and the necessity for divine grace. Then came the Reformation. Luther, and more particularly Calvin, adopted an attitude that was more than Augustinian in its predestinationism. The Council of Trent condemned both their interpretation and that of Pelagius, but the effect of the Reformation, with its general stressing of human free will and individual responsibility, was to turn the minds of many theologians back to the need for a new framing of a doctrine of grace, which should mitigate the virtual determinism involved in Augustinian theology. This was largely the work of a Spanish Jesuit, called Molina (1535-1601). He endeavoured, in his *Harmony of Free Will and Free Grace*, to reconcile, as the title implies, these various antitheses in a doctrine of "congruism", which supposes that grace is necessary indeed but only efficacious with the co-operation of the will.

As this thesis was different, not only from that of Luther and Calvin, but also from that of St. Thomas Aquinas, Molina's system was attacked by the Dominicans, who had always claimed to be the true interpreters of Aquinas and the official representatives of Catholic orthodoxy. The matter might have remained an academic discussion, had Molinism not been taken up in France and popularised by a M. Le Maire, Professor of Theology at the University of Paris.

The Jesuits were reproached with framing a doctrine of

grace and free will which, if carried to its logical conclusion, extolled human will and reason, and ultimately rendered unnecessary divine grace and Incarnation, and really took the whole meaning out of Christianity. The Dominicans upheld the Thomist standpoint. The two religious orders violently quarrelled for some years until in 1607 a Papal Bull declared both their points of view to be orthodox, and forbade them to continue the discussion on the ground that they were introducing into the Church an unnecessary element of discord. The difference between the two points of view in fact was not very great and may be summed up in these terms: "All men have at birth a certain minimum of divine grace in themselves, which is enough to enable them not to sin if they choose to use this grace which is in them. This grace is termed 'sufficient grace'. It is sufficient in so far as it constitutes a bare minimum making the Christian life possible. If they do use it, it is no longer a merely potential force. It becomes efficacious and this efficacious grace is the real effective work of God in man." The one difference between Molinists and Thomists resided in the origin of this efficacy of grace, the former stressing the human will and the other the divine initiative.

Protests against "Jesuitry", both in theology and in ethics, came from numerous quarters. We have indicated how the Society was looked upon with suspicion by the political authorities, with jealousy by rival educationists, and with dislike by other theologians. But none of these attacked the system as a whole. There now arose a body which was to meet the Jesuits on every field, to compete with their schools, to denounce their moral teaching, and to erect against their doctrines what it held to be only a restatement of true primitive Catholic teaching, but was to become the Jansenist heresy.

CHAPTER V

The Beginnings of Port-Royal

WHEN Angélique Arnauld, the second of the twenty children of Antoine Arnauld, a well-known Paris barrister, was made Mother Superior of the Abbey of Port-Royal, she was only eleven years old! Unbelievable as it may be to modern minds, she took up residence with her twelve sister-nuns. The monastery had been established some four centuries before in the beautiful, though marshy and damp valley of Chevreuse, some twenty miles from Paris. For some years monastic discipline had become very relaxed; religious observances were lifeless and rare, and the nuns, all of them ladies of good society, lived very much as if they were still in the world. Then, suddenly, as the result, it is said, of a sermon preached by a disreputable mendicant friar, Mother Angélique underwent a transforming experience; she became seized by a reforming zeal, consumed by spiritual passion. She determined to bring her convent back to its former discipline, to make it really a house of prayer and contemplation. She came to the conclusion that this was only possible by complete separation from the world, both physically by the exclusion of all visitors, and spiritually, by a life of rigid poverty and consecration. It was, in fact, a Puritan revival, with a vengeance. On the 25th September 1609 she closed the door of the monastery on her own father: the closing of that wicket-

gate was to begin in French Catholicism a movement not unlike the English Puritan revival.

A few years later, partly through increase in numbers, partly through danger of malaria, the convent was transferred to Paris, and the reforming zeal of Angelique began to attract some attention. But the decisive date in the history of Port-Royal was when in 1633 the abbé de St. Cyran became its spiritual director.

Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbot of St. Cyran, had been a student in the University of Louvain, which, through Justus Lipsius, had been for some years a centre of Neo-stoicism, though more tinged with Christianity than that presented to France by du Vair and Montaigne. St. Cyran took from this philosophy its rigidity, its insistence on individual responsibility, its austerity, and became an apostle of what we should term a rigid Puritanism, coupled with revivalist fervour and insistence on individual salvation.

His call for a personal religion, in which the ecclesiastical channels of grace seemed to play a very small part, awoke the suspicion of the authorities, and his dislike of the monastic clergy aroused the opposition of the Jesuits, so that Port-Royal was very soon on the "black list". But St. Cyran was not long in attracting other disciples than the nuns of Port-Royal. Mother Angélique's nephew, Antoine Le Maître, fell under his spell, and, on his advice, abandoned his barrister's practice, left home, and came to live as a sort of hermit in a shanty adjoining to Port-Royal. He was not long alone. One after the other, his brothers and other relatives followed him; other members of the Parisian professional upper middle-class followed suit. Very soon they removed in a body to the disused buildings of Port-Royal in the Fields, rebuilt the monastery, cleared the unhealthy swamps, and became a community of monks, though not actually bound by any vows.

Manual work was not enough to keep them busy, and they soon had to seek some outlet for their high intellectual gifts. Some practised medicine, others wrote religious treatises, most of them turned to teaching. They first took charge of a few neighbouring children, then opened a regular school and soon acquired such a reputation as educationists that schools run on Port-Royalist methods and principles were started in several parts of the country. These schools competed with those of the Jesuits, whose system they deliberately challenged: they sought to develop in the children habits of independent thought; they believed in self-control rather than external discipline and were more awake to the importance of natural science and of scientific observation in general.

It is easy to see that the movement was bound to come into conflict with the Jesuits. The professional jealousy engendered by Port-Royal's educational reforms was but one manifestation of the anger with which the powerful Society was bound to look upon this Puritan revival, which challenged so directly their more easy-going methods of propaganda. The connection of the Arnaulds with Port-Royal further embittered the quarrel, for the father of Angélique had been one of the leaders in an attempt made by the University of Paris to expel the Society from France for having plotted against the life of Henry IV. Although not popular with the authorities, the Jesuits managed to awaken Richelieu's animosity against Port-Royal. He disliked its reforming zeal, its "fanaticism". In particular Antoine Arnauld's retirement from the world "greatly displeased Richelieu and was disapproved of by all decent folk", as Father Rapin says,¹ and did much to compromise St. Cyran in the eyes of the Cardinal. St. Cyran was arrested in 1638, and after some years in the fortress of Vincennes died in 1643, shortly after his release.

¹ Quoted by Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux au 17^e siècle*, ii. p. 314.

So far, "Port-Royalism", as we may call it, was in no sense a sect, with a specific doctrine. It was scarcely more than the grouping of men and women who felt that Christianity must be taken more seriously than the official Church seemed to admit. We have advisedly used the term "Puritanism". St. Cyran and his friends represent a tendency as difficult to define as what we call by that term. They crystallised the inevitable protest against the laxity of the Jesuits, and against the other danger of a sentimental mysticism which might follow from the influence of St. François de Sales.

It is easy to say that such crystallisation implied exaggeration. To Professor Rebelliau's remark that "Jansenism was, as it were, expected", M. Brémond sharply replies that all needed moral reform had already come. "Without St. Cyran, the reaction towards austerity begun before him and forming the almost necessary sequel to the great outburst of religious fervour of the time would have continued its normal development." M. Brémond sees signs of this necessary reaction in St. Vincent de Paul, who stated that "holy strictness bears infinitely more fruits than excessive indulgence, on whatever pretext".¹ But the main fear of the age seems to have been excessive austerity, and the current point of view is best represented in François Bonal² who wrote that "it would be easier to replant the Garden of Eden in our countryside than to re-establish what is called the purity of the primitive Church in all Christian lives. What can and ought to be done, and is done daily by the grace of God, is to re-establish in ordinary lives that faithful harmony with our vocation, that rich middle way, that sober wisdom, which must regulate our duties according to the laws of our establishment, or of our position, and of our powers. . . . The danger is, lest under colour of a reforma-

¹ Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux*, iv. pp. 30-33.

² In *Le Chrétien*, quoted by Brémond, *ibid.* i. pp. 405-412.

tion of Christianity, there should arise a bold and proud sect of reformers, who will scare the mildest natures, and who, by fencing round Christianity, by making it harsh and difficult, terrible and inaccessible, may make a few austere converts but will create many weaklings without courage and many more impenitent unbelievers."

Against an undefined vague movement, however, little could have been done. As long as Port-Royal remained only a centre of Puritan reform and education, it could only be opposed by greater religious fervour and better education—it could only be crushed by the provision of what it had set out to give to the Church. But a change was coming over the little community: Port-Royalism was going to give place to Jansenism.

M. Brémond remarks that "just as the function creates the organ, so the sect creates the heresy".¹ He means by this that whereas some sects clearly come into existence to set forth a particular doctrine, it is no less often the case that sects come into existence almost by a spontaneous generation—association round a particular person or place—and that the group thus created needs after a while to justify its existence as a separate entity by fastening on some point of belief, the insistence on which becomes their *raison d'être*. The sect comes first, the distinctive dogma later.

Among St. Cyran's fellow-students at Louvain was one Cornelius Jansen, who was destined later to become Bishop of Ypres. The two young men struck up a warm friendship and spent many days together in discussing plans for the reform of the Church. Jansen was keenly opposed to the loose teaching of the Jesuits, and both felt the Church needed thorough purification. From Jansen St. Cyran received his Puritan outlook; but they discussed more than Church morals. Jansen was troubled by the problem of free will and divine

¹ Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux*, iv. p. 304.

grace; and the two friends frequently talked over the problem. In particular they were drawn to the study of St. Augustine, whose teaching, they felt, should have been authoritative as coming from one of the great Fathers of the Church, but had been ignored in the controversies on the subject. This Augustinian teaching was distinctly predestinarian in its tendencies; it certainly cut across Molinism and at times looked perilously like Calvinism.

St. Cyran brought to Port-Royal these Augustinian tendencies; they permeated his teaching and gave a doctrinal basis to his Puritanism. In 1638 Jansen died; two years later his epoch-making book, *The Augustinus*, appeared. Meanwhile St. Cyran had been put into prison. It can, therefore, be asked how far St. Cyran himself was responsible for the adoption by Port-Royal of the views that came to be associated with Jansen.

St. Cyran himself was barely a Jansenist in the real sense of the term; that is to say, he never formulated a system of theology which could be deemed Jansenistic. He seems to have been swayed more by emotion than by sheer intellect—warm-hearted, enthusiastic, at the same time dour and harsh in his beliefs, lacking in balance. Brémond says “there was in him something of Wesley, though he was vastly inferior to that great man”.¹ There is certainly much in common between the origins of Methodism and those of Jansenism—the same vague desire to kindle a warmer spiritual life, the same reforming tendencies, the same absence of any intention of creating a new sect or breaking away from the Mother-Church. But Port-Royal lacked the courage of the early Methodists—otherwise the religious history of France would have been very different.²

¹ Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux*, iv. p. 213.

² “Jansenism was an obedience-lacking Catholicism, and a courage-lacking Protestantism”. (de Carne, quoted by Stapfer, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 15, 1908.)

St. Cyran then gave two things to Port-Royal. Firstly, a view of religion as something hard, stern, demanding; a life of separation from the world; a refusal to compromise with anything that fell short of Christian perfection. This Puritanical standpoint came from theological views, still undefined and perhaps incoherent, which could be traced to the influence of Jansen but were certainly not as yet so defined as to be given any label, although they did create a predisposition to welcome Jansenist theology when it would appear as a definite system.

There was next a tendency to look upon religion as something intensely personal. Nothing is to be done without the divine Spirit; and if the Spirit be present, the Church and its system tend to take but a secondary importance. A Port-Royalist will not be overawed by the mere assertion of ecclesiastical authority.

This independent spirit towards the Church raises the inevitable question of the relation of Port-Royal to Protestantism. Port-Royal always professed to be bitterly opposed to heresy. "M. de St. Cyran never opened a heretical book without exorcising it, being sure that the Devil actually inhabited it."¹ But no impartial student can fail to conclude that had the Jansenist theologians really studied with an open mind the writings of Calvin they must have seen that between their theology and his there was no perceptible difference. However much the Jansenists claimed to be faithful sons of the Church, it cannot be denied that in outlook, and almost in practice, they tended to be far more like the heretics they rejected. "All that characterised Jansenism—its hardness towards human nature, its doctrine on grace, its contempt for human weaknesses, its scanty respect for the hierarchy and even the doctrine of the Church, its almost total indifference to

¹ Ste-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, ii. p. 196.

the sacraments of Baptism and Ordination, its appeal to a 'better-informed Pope', its direct appeal to Jesus—all this the Church had fought in Reformers and Mystics."¹

And what worried Port-Royal, in all its declarations of faithful allegiance to the Church, was that Protestants tended to look upon them as brethren in the faith who one day would enter the true Protestant fold. "St. Cyran and Pascal were both Protestants," says a Swiss record quoted by Ste. Beuve. This was quite inaccurate, of course, but the mistake was not surprising. To define Jansenists, as M. Gazier does, in his *History of Jansenism*, as "Catholics who dislike the Jesuits", is either a jest or an amazing self-deception. Port-Royal cannot escape the dilemma: if there is nothing new in your doctrine, why not quietly submit to ecclesiastical obedience? If there *is* something new, have the courage of your conviction; do not hide it, or cover it up; proclaim it, and be ready to take the consequence, as have all great Pioneers of Truth.

Up to the death of St. Cyran, then, it was still possible for Port-Royal to remain merely a centre of reform, giving to Catholicism a much needed Puritan element, but in no wise claiming for itself more than additional zeal and fervour, and special insistence on an aspect of Christianity which was in danger of being overlooked. The publication of *The Augustinus* in 1640 need not have changed the situation: it was, after all, but a heavy theological treatise, which, even if deemed worth a condemnation at Rome, could have remained ignored by most Frenchmen.

Of course it revived the controversies of Grace which as we saw divided Jesuits and Thomists. The Jesuits attacked the book violently, as merely a hotchpotch of old predestinarian heresies. The Thomists were not so sure as to what they ought to do, for there were points of contact between

¹ Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, vol. vii. pt. i. pp. 91-93.

their teaching and that of Jansen. The Pope, fearing trouble from fresh discussions on so abstruse a subject, ordered silence to be observed on those questions, as had been done in 1607. It is doubtful whether this order would have been obeyed; but any chance of shelving the problem was lost by the rushing into the fray of Port-Royal, headed by Arnauld.

A born controversialist, with a real genius for polemics—Pascal owes him a great deal—he saw in *The Augustinus* a complete statement of the distinctive theology of Port-Royal, and threw into the battle his three *Apologies for Mr. Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, and for the Doctrine of St. Augustine as expounded in his book, "The Augustinus"*—the first of these appeared in 1643, the third in 1645.

Some years were to elapse before the real dispute which lay behind all this came to a head. For the present the only result of Arnauld's intervention was a desultory pamphlet warfare in which neither side could be said to gain the advantage. What really matters is that Port-Royal had now become the avowed depository of the theological system bequeathed by Jansen. Consequently, any proof that this theology was not orthodox was a valuable weapon against Port-Royal. Its enemies need no longer trouble about its moral teaching, its educational theories; all they need to do is to start a heresy-hunt. Port-Royal, by nailing its colours to the Jansenist mast, had signed its death-warrant: the Reformers had become the heretics. The pity of it was they never boldly or frankly faced the charge. For weal or woe, the battle was now open between Port-Royal and the champions of Catholic orthodoxy, the Jesuits.

The clash between Jansenism and Jesuitism was one of outlook and temperament rather than one of real fundamental conception. The theological differences often appear to us very subtle, and in the moral controversy it is impossible to

deny that the ultimate difference between both parties might, in practice, have been reduced to little; but the two did have a really fundamentally different way of facing the religious problem. "Jesuits and Jansenists", says Professor Chevalier,¹ "show us in bold outline two types of mind, two attitudes of the individual towards truth, or what he thinks to be truth. The former, anxious, above all, to spread truth, to win to her the hearts, minds and manners of men, try and make her more accessible, easier to accept and to practise: they endeavour therefore to find points of contact and of conciliation; it is by such that they approach those whom they are trying to convert; they press them to begin by accepting these, postponing for later examination those questions that divide, those beliefs which may antagonise reason, those rules that restrict behaviour. The others, anxious above all to safeguard principles, not believing in the possibility of conciliating even for a moment truth and error, present what is true in its entirety, and hold forth morality in its perfect purity, whatever be the cost to be paid by those who will accept it: their tendency will be, if anything, to overstress the unreasonableness of truth, the demands of morals; they wish to impress on the individual the cost of the necessary sacrifice; they will have fewer followers, no doubt, but these will be more whole-hearted, more reliable, and the doctrine will be maintained in its purity. The latter charged the former with sacrificing men to truth, with erecting barriers, with setting themselves up as infallible judges of what is right and true, with lacking in humanness; and were counter-charged with sacrificing truth to the interested passions of men, with diminishing her, so as to put her within reach of all, with undermining her secretly by introducing the enemy into the centre of the fortress, since the essence of truth is to exclude error: in a word, with being too human and neglectful of God."

¹ *Pascal*, pp. 35-36.

There lies in a word the irreducible clash which divided Jesuits and Jansenists; there lies the origin of the conflict which is going to oppose them to each other. Meanwhile, the greatest of all those who were to engage in this struggle was making his name in another field.

BOOK II

THE MAN OF SCIENCE

CHAPTER I

Early Years

BLAISE PASCAL was born on the 19th June 1623, in the still old-world town of Clermont-Ferrand, the capital of the province of Auvergne, a city of narrow steep streets in a bleak, hard country of rugged outlines. Those who wish to explain temperament by early surroundings find it easy to attribute the austerity and harshness of Pascal's outlook to the austerity and harshness of his native country, but such explanations do not go very far; Pascal, in fact, only lived in Auvergne till the age of eight, and after this spent the rest of his life in the pleasant and artistic cities of Rouen and Paris.

More important, however, than his physical birth-place is his intellectual and social environment. His father, Étienne Pascal, was a civil servant, and belonged to an old Auvergne family of what we may call the local squirearchy. His mother, Antoinette Bégon, was the daughter of a well-to-do business man, who was for many years a town councillor. On both sides, therefore, Pascal belonged to the soil; he inherited from both parents traditions of hard work, of personal and professional honesty, and an outlook that was essentially that of the prosperous middle-class of the period.

Pascal's father was able to transmit to his son something more unusual than those vague if desirable traditions. He seems to have been a striking personality; his wife having died

in 1626, he shortly afterwards resigned his post and gave himself up altogether to the education of his children. Not every father would have made such a sacrifice, nor indeed, would every father have been fit to take up such a work; but Étienne Pascal was a man of very wide culture and solid learning, and, what was rare in his day, of a strongly scientific rather than literary turn of mind, with the result that his children received just the kind of training that was destined to bring out the exceptional scientific gifts of his son. His theories on education, by the way, ran counter to those of the Jesuits, for in 1630 he was organising an official protest against the opening of a Jesuit secondary school at Clermont-Ferrand; from which we may infer that in his earlier years Pascal must have been to some extent prejudiced against the Society of Jesus. We may also note that Etienne Pascal, as a law student, had been recommended by his father to M. Arnauld the barrister, whose twenty children (whom Etienne Pascal must have known) formed the nucleus of the Port-Royal community. Some of Pascal's later opinions can thus be partly traced to very early home influences.

It was very soon evident that Blaise Pascal was no ordinary child. "From the very earliest time he could speak", says his elder sister, "he gave signs of an absolutely extraordinary mind", and even if we discount some of the stories told about his childhood, in particular that of "having invented Euclid" at the age of twelve, it is certain that his mathematical genius was extremely precocious; but then, the kind of training he was receiving was calculated to develop that gift. His naturally inquiring mind was stimulated by the insistence his father placed on scientific method, which Pascal was himself to define later on as "the explaining of every phenomenon for which a logical or physical cause can be found, the taking of nothing for granted, the refusal to accept as proof what is contrary to logical reason".

For instance, he was only a child when he noticed that the striking of a china dish with a knife produced a sound which seemed to continue indefinitely until it was actually stopped by the hand: he was not satisfied until he had found the explanation of this phenomenon by a series of experiments, with the result that at the age of eleven he produced a treatise on sounds. Similarly, as soon as he had observed the most elementary facts of geometry he was able to advance rapidly to the most advanced conclusions, so that at sixteen he published his essay on Conic Sections and had invented a principle which is called "Pascal's Theorem".

As one of his biographers remarks, "What one particularly noticed in this child was a remarkable power of going to the very depths of things, and of differentiating between true explanations and those that are only words, so that, if some explanation of the latter kind were given him, his mind could not remain satisfied with it and remained perpetually restless until he had discovered the true explanation".¹

It would be a mistake to imagine, however, that the whole of Pascal's young life was spent in study. His father did not believe in overtaxing a young brain, and was more anxious to develop right methods of thought than to load his mind prematurely with knowledge. In fact, it is not clear that his knowledge was ever very extensive. M. Strowski believes it contained serious gaps, and thinks that Pascal never learned very much; he knew what can be found out by observation and personal calculations, but little of what can only be obtained from books. It must certainly be admitted that Pascal's historical allusions and judgements are extremely superficial, and that he does not seem to have known any foreign modern language, except perhaps a smattering of Italian. Latin and Greek, of course, he learnt.

¹ Strowski, *Pascal*, ii. p. 148.

What was most clearly lacking in his training was, however, the softening touch of a mother's influence. Gilberte, Pascal's elder sister, did endeavour to take a mother's place, and Jacqueline, his younger sister, was his close companion and intimate friend. Nevertheless, it was essentially a masculine household, and some of Pascal's rigidity might have been attenuated if his mother had lived, or, indeed, if his father had married again. At the same time, in what one of his biographers calls "a certain thin-skinned nervous petulance, with a want of reliance and self-control",¹ we see the feminine sensitiveness of the home-trained boy, who lacks the bracing influence of brothers or schoolfellows.

Another determining factor in Pascal's life was his ill-health. From infancy he began to suffer from a disease which never left him and which was to carry him off in his fortieth year. What this was exactly, we do not know; medical opinion seems to indicate some form of tuberculosis of the bones, but this is not unanimously admitted. From the age of eighteen to the end of his life Pascal scarcely knew what it was to spend one day without pain, and he was incapacitated for long periods from all active work. This struggle against ill-health could not but have its effect on his temperament and outlook; he often refers to it in various parts of his work, and it ultimately led him to formulate a philosophy of suffering and disease as the normal lot of the Christian.

When Pascal was eight years old, his father removed to Paris, probably feeling himself and his children too much cut off from social life in the somewhat dull little town to which he was no longer bound by professional duties. The Paris of the sixteen thirties was dominated by the virtual king of France, the Cardinal Richelieu, whose word was law not only in the political but also in the literary and artistic world. He

¹ St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 3.

was about to create the French Academy and his patronage was the condition of success in letters as in other domains. It was by a piece of youthful poetical flattery and by her skilful acting in some children's theatricals that Jacqueline Pascal was, a little later, to win from him her father's pardon for having dared to protest against one of his financial measures, a forced reduction of the rate of interest on Paris municipal bonds.

The Pascals seem to have been received in some of the most cultured society of the day, and it would certainly be a mistake to think that Blaise Pascal's boyish years were spent under extreme puritanical influences. They had friends in literary, theatrical, and legal circles; the Pascal girls had as close companions the two daughters of Madame Saintot, sister of a fashionable poet and mistress of Voiture the essayist and critic; Mondory, the famous actor, and a close friend of Richelieu, was a regular visitor: so was Le Pailleur, who was as dissolute an individual as he was a clever mathematician. He once invited a fellow-poet Dalibray to meet him at a certain fashionable coffee-house, where "by divine art got from a bottle of wine they would destroy the memory of science and glory". Nothing very puritanical in all this!

But neither Blaise nor his father spent all their time in fashionable drawing-rooms. Both regularly attended scientific gatherings, of which many were held at the time—informal, unofficial academies, meeting usually in private houses, and where Blaise must have learnt much of the art of debate, as well as coming into contact with the keenest scientific minds of the period. It was also there, perhaps, that he picked up a tendency that is curiously at variance with the seriousness and passionate sincerity of the real man—a love of discussion for its own sake, a desire to score points off an adversary, and a certain childish annoyance at being beaten or forestalled. He soon made his mark in those gatherings; he was spoken

of to the great Cardinal as being "very clever at mathematics", though only fifteen years old. He was evidently well known and popular, a brilliant and promising young man.

By the time Blaise was sixteen, and Jacqueline fourteen, their father seems to have wearied of his more or less idle life, and thought that he could go back into official work without any harm coming to his children. He therefore sought for reinstatement in the civil service, and in September 1639, the Pascal family left Paris for Rouen, where Étienne Pascal had just been appointed a Royal Commissioner.

The ancient capital of Normandy was passing through critical times. In 1637 came an epidemic of plague; then a period of intense agricultural and industrial depression, that was followed by a depreciation of currency, entailing a heavy burden of taxation and much misery. Regular armies of brigands went about the high roads, attacking officials and making civilised life impossible. In Rouen itself there had been serious riots, so serious that the Royal Intendant had been driven out of the city. Étienne Pascal was sent as one of the special officials entrusted with the work of restoring order, his own department being the calling in of taxes in arrears and the raising of special punitive levies; but the repression was not merely financial; many ringleaders were put to death and Rouen lost several of her municipal privileges.

It was thus under painful circumstances that Pascal became acquainted with the beautiful city, with its narrow streets, its quaint old houses, its magnificent churches, and the superb panorama of the river and hills. But it does not seem that the beauty of Rouen influenced him, to any extent, any more than had the rugged severity of Clermont-Ferrand; nor does he appear in any way to have been shocked or pained at the scenes he had witnessed or at the punitive measures enforced. The only echoes, in fact, of the Normandy riots

which we find in his work are allusions to the wrongfulness of rebellion and to the rights of authority.

His father's own special duties, however, happened to put him on the track of one of his most interesting discoveries. Étienne Pascal having complicated calculations to make, his son started inventing a calculating machine, and after several efforts produced a satisfactory apparatus. This he improved in later years, the machine now in existence in a Paris museum dating from 1652.

Of Pascal himself during the nine years he spent in Rouen, we know really very little. For most young men the years ranging from sixteen to twenty-five are the most decisive and formative time of life but it does not hold good of Pascal. He was, in a sense, a formed man at the age of fifteen¹ and gives an impression of never having been young. At the same time, he never became set in his ways of thought, but passed from stage to stage of a mental and spiritual development which never ceased till his death, although it culminated in the great crisis of his thirty-second year.

The time spent at Rouen was therefore not of such importance in Pascal's formation as might have been expected, considering the position and importance of the town and the vigour of its life. He was, in fact, too strong a personality for any external influences to go very deep.

The Pascal family found itself, however, in a town of keen intellectual activity. The Rouen of these years was renowned as a centre of poetry, and the king of this little literary kingdom was, of course, the woods and forests superintendent who has come down to posterity as the great tragic writer Corneille. He soon became acquainted with the Pascal family; Jacqueline Pascal, who, as we saw, had a pretty talent for verse writing,

¹ And yet he said, "one isn't a man before twenty" (*Discourse on the Passion of Love*).

won a prize at the local Festival. She was too shy and too young to appear in person to recite her verses and Corneille read them in her stead. The friendship with Corneille probably came through their common friendship with the actor Mondory, who frequently came from Paris with travelling companies. Rouen, in fact, was in close touch with Paris and was often described as a miniature capital.

With the early forties new influences are appearing in this old town, which had always been not merely an intellectual but a religious centre. It had at one time been a stronghold of Protestantism; it had retained more than the normal proportion of Huguenots and was one of the towns in France where both religions lived side by side in friendship. Rouen was also one of the great centres of the Neo-stoic movement; it was there that most of du Vair's editions and commentaries of Epictetus were published, so that there were many currents of serious thought, and the society in which the Pascals moved was by no means frivolous, although it might not be Puritanical.

They had not been long in Rouen before Corneille himself deserted the light manner of his earlier years and became the author of the philosophical tragedies, culminating in that greatest of religious plays, *Polyeucte*. That Pascal knew the play is certain; it is even possible that he had heard a private reading of it, before its staging. One would like to think that it had some influence upon his religious life, but of that we have no evidence and only know that he was always fond of the stage until a time came when he renounced it completely.

Thus seven years passed, chiefly spent, as far as Pascal was concerned, in scientific research along lines of physics which were to bear fruit a little later, partly also, no doubt, in the study of life in general; but nothing so far gives any reason to expect that Pascal was ever going to be anything more than a young man of the world, serious-minded, certainly, exceptionally

gifted for scientific work, of broad interests, leading a life to which no exception could be taken, but not in any way likely to exercise any serious influence in his own day and generation, or indeed to be known outside a small circle of intimate friends and of scientists.

The year 1646 was, however, to cause a sudden break in the apparently smooth and uneventful flow of this life, and this break was to be twofold. Pascal's scientific genius was suddenly to be called into existence by a particular problem of physics, his solution to which was going to reveal him to the whole scientific world—the problem of the vacuum. At the same time he and his family were going to be brought face to face with a sharp, dominating unequivocal challenge, the claims of God on the individual.

CHAPTER II

Jansenism and Science

IN January 1646 Étienne Pascal had a heavy fall when, it is said, out to prevent a duel. He was on his back for some weeks. His broken thigh was dealt with, not by a professional surgeon, in the strict sense of the word, but by what we should describe as intelligent amateurs, two Rouen gentlemen, who seemed to combine some knowledge and practice of medicine, with a great care for the cure of souls. Those two gentlemen rapidly put Monsieur Pascal on his feet again, but their work did not stop there. They had been for some time under the strong influence of a Rouen vicar, the curé de Rouville, who was himself an enthusiastic disciple of St. Cyran.

Jansenism had been developing in various parts of the country, usually through the local propaganda of some individual who had fallen under its spell. There were thus little groups of Jansenists in various parts of France, more particularly of course in those parts that were within easy reach of Paris. The spread of Jansenist ideas had been made easier, partly by the relaxation of persecution and partly by the publication of three books, which had been for some time exercising a great influence. The first of these was what we may describe as the great Jansenist text-book, *The Augustinus*. Then came the more readable and more accessible work of Jansen, the *Discourses on the Reformation of the Inner Man*,

and finally a devotional little book by the great Port-Royal propagandist, Arnauld, *Of Frequent Communions*. The last of these had gone through four editions in six months and formed one of the most frequent topics of conversation in drawing-rooms.

It is probable that what struck the Pascal family, and indeed most of those who came into touch with the Jansenist movement, was not so much its theology as the intensity of its moral and spiritual appeal. Religion had so far been to the Pascals, as to many others, a department of life to which, indeed, respect must be paid, and for which a certain amount of time must be found, but in no sense something of a dominating and of an absorbing nature. They held what may be termed the theory of "the water-tight compartment", separating religion from everyday life. "My father", Gilberte Pascal tells us, "had always had a great respect for religion and had inculcated it to us, particularly to my brother, giving him the fundamental idea that everything which is of faith can, in no sense, fall under the control of reason, much less be made subject to it. This my brother never questioned; and inquisitive as he was about everything, about finding the reason and cause of all, he was at the same time as obedient as a child in all matters of religion." It might be too much to say that Pascal only saw in religion outward forms, but he kept it within its "proper sphere". If science was not actually his religion, at any rate it had been so far his dominating interest.

The Pascals were now told, that if religion was true at all, which they did not doubt, it must take up the whole life, that nothing can be withdrawn from its influence, that God demands a surrender of every part of the individual, that, in fact, with God it was everything or nothing. This thorough interpretation of Christianity seemed to suit the logical and somewhat hard mind of Pascal. He began reading Jansen's *Discourses on*

the Reformation of the Inner Man, and came across allusions to this "perpetually restless inquisitiveness, so called science because it springs from the base desire to know, and which is politely called science, this disease of the soul, which corrupts all the more in that it comes now veiled in the specious name of 'health', that is to say of science. . . . Hence has come this inquiry into the secrets of nature, which do not concern us, which it is useless to know, and which men only seek to know for the mere sake of the knowledge itself."

The third part of the book was on pride and contained equally searching passages for a young scientist, culminating in an appeal to "let the soul rise into the pure and calm light of eternity, and thus by submission to Him, who alone is the Source of all grace and all glory, to look with contempt upon things of the world as beneath the soul and unworthy of its affections."

Exactly by what spiritual and mental processes Pascal accepted these new ideas, we do not know; all we can tell is that Pascal yielded to this pressure and became an ardent apostle of Jansenism to those around him. His young sister Jacqueline was his first convert. Thanks to his influence she gave up the world and the marriage that was being discussed for her. A little later their elder sister, who, now married to her cousin, Florin Périer, had returned to Rouen for a visit, also adopted the new faith and became a rigid Puritan, giving herself up to good works, followed in this by her husband, who to the end of his days lived a life of exceptional austerity and self-discipline.

But whereas father and daughters never wavered in their new way of living, Blaise seems very rapidly to have swung back to his old outlook and interests. It is fairly clear now, that this first conversion, as it is usually called, was more a moral than a spiritual phenomenon and can best be defined as

an acceptance by the mind of a view of man borrowed by Jansen from St. Augustine, that is to say, predestination—a standpoint which would naturally appeal to a scientific mind like Pascal's, always tempted to adopt a rigid and logical view of the universe. Thus one may say that the result of this first conversion is merely to make him accept the Jansenist interpretation of Christianity and the world, but did not make of him a Christian—at any rate, not in the sense of one for whom Christianity is the supreme reason of existence. He soon went back to his scientific pursuits; in fact, scientific life gripped him with greater force than ever. He may know, indeed, that in order to be a child of God one must give God everything, but he himself has not yet made such a surrender.

His fresh absorption in scientific work is evidence of the caution with which we must use the biography written by his sister Madame Périer. She herself says of the period: "Immediately after this experiment (concerning the vacuum) when he was only twenty-four, having been caused by providence to read some works on religion, he was so enlightened by God, in this reading, that he understood thoroughly that the Christian religion obliged us to live for God alone and to have no other aim in life but Him; so that from that time onwards he abandoned all other forms of knowledge, in order to apply himself solely to the one thing which Jesus Christ tells us to be needful." Now this is absolutely inaccurate. There is at this time no outward change in Pascal's life; he is more than ever absorbed in scientific research, nor does he adopt any fresh ways of life, good works, mortifications, religious practices, which might indicate a changed outlook. There is in fact no evidence of what Pascal himself would have termed in later years real conversion.

Early in 1647 Pascal left Rouen for Paris. This departure was caused partly by his health, which he was told might be

improved in Paris, partly by the call of scientific research, which could more easily be carried out in the capital. By September, 1647, we find him and his sister settled in Paris. At this part of his life he and Jacqueline are living in the closest intimacy which can unite a brother and sister. She was both his nurse and his private secretary, and it is not surprising that she should ultimately have been under God the instrument of his final conversion, of the experience which made Pascal a saint. The very closeness of this intimacy explains the reluctance with which a few years later Pascal saw her leave him for the convent.

It was largely, we have said, for scientific research that Pascal left Paris for Rouen. The problem on which his mind had been working for some time was that of the vacuum, one of the dominating problems of the seventeenth-century science, and one ultimately involving the most fundamental metaphysical conception of the universe. The seventeenth-century mind accepted unquestioningly the Aristotelian principle that nature abhors a vacuum, the very possibility of which Descartes, for instance, flatly denied. Now in 1644 the Italian scientist Torricelli had actually created, in an inverted tube of mercury, a vacuum, the existence of which was proved by a rushing in of water on the overturning of the tube, thus showing that the space in the tube was really void and not filled with air. Pascal gave himself up to a twofold work; first, the repeating of Torricelli's experiment under all kinds of circumstances, so as to establish beyond all doubt the fact of the existence of the vacuum; next, the finding out of the cause of this phenomenon. He strongly suspected, as indeed did Torricelli himself, the pressure of the atmosphere to be responsible; this he demonstrated by experiments carried out on his behalf by his brother-in-law, M. Périer, who took a tube of quicksilver to Pascal's native mountain of the Puy-de-Dôme. This experiment

showed conclusively that altitude affected the height of the column of mercury, increase of air pressure increasing its height. The barometer had thus been invented.¹

The principles thus discovered were expounded by Pascal in a series of treatises, several of which were written in reply to denials by other scientists of the validity of his research. "The truths that make up hydrostatics had already been discovered," writes Duhem,² "but the scattered materials lay pell-mell in a disorderly heap, waiting for the man who could combine them into a harmonious whole. That man was Pascal. He did not wish to bring forward novelties, so much as to arrange and organise what others had said before him."

He found himself particularly opposed by a Jesuit, Father Noel, and by Descartes. The Jesuits were unlucky in their champion, who made himself look rather foolish, and in their methods, for they accused Pascal of endeavouring to rob Torricelli of the credit of the initial discovery. Pascal's answers do not show much forbearance, or glad suffering of fools; he is proud and even overbearing in his replies. The old Adam is still uppermost.

Of outward events in this phase of Pascal's life we know little. His letters, and more particularly his sister's, give us glimpses of the way in which his time was filled; visits to and from scientific friends and acquaintances, much time given to doctors and medical treatment, much private study and

¹ "The actual idea of explaining the ascent of water by the force of the gravity of the air first came to Descartes, but he left it entirely vague. Torricelli tested and established the fact of the phenomenon, by showing that the quicksilver rises in the tube to a height which is to that reached by water in a pump, in inverse ratio to the gravity of the two liquids. Finally, Pascal proved this truth completely and definitely by the Puy-de-Dôme experiment which is his alone" (Havet, in the *Revue politique et littéraire*, August 1885).

² In the *Revue générale des Sciences*, July 1903 (quoted by St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 122).

meditation, frequent attendance at divine service, occasional visits to Port-Royal. These visits soon entirely ceased. Pascal was not long in discovering that his pursuits and outlook were not those of which the Port-Royal solitaries could approve. Scientific research carried on with such passion seemed to them scarcely compatible with adequate absorption in the things of God, and Pascal's insistence, during one of these visits, on the possibility of defending the essential thesis of Jansenism by pure common-sense principles of reasoning led to the protest that he was rationalising belief and doing without faith—the very thing with which he was later to reproach Descartes.

After a few months Jacqueline and Blaise were joined in their Paris home by their father, who had resigned his post early in 1648. A year later the three Pascals went on a lengthy visit to the Périers at Clermont-Ferrand.¹ This stay in his native town does not appear to have played any part in Pascal's development. It is probable that he went on studying and meeting old friends; the extreme puritanism of his sister and brother-in-law and the death from smallpox of a little niece would certainly prevent any more worldly occupations. In May 1650 the Pascals returned to Paris.

Fifteen months later, on the 24th of September 1651, Étienne Pascal died. This was, needless to say, a great blow to the son with whom he had been on such intimate terms. On that occasion Pascal wrote to his sister a letter on death, full indeed of the most orthodox sentiments of Christian resignation, but which may be said to be more of an essay practically inspired by St. Cyran than the genuine expression of the deeper Pascal. Its one interest, from the point of view of

¹ "He hurried off both of his children to Clermont, to save them from two opposite dangers—one from becoming a nun at Port-Royal, the other from forsaking Port-Royal altogether" (St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 133).

Pascal's mental development, lies in the fact that it is a Christian answer to the heathen philosophy of Seneca and Socrates, the latter being always taken as the type of perfect Stoic.

His father's death was, however, to cause a further change in Pascal's life. His sister Jacqueline had for some time expressed her intention of retiring into the convent of Port-Royal. She had yielded to her father's request that she should postpone this step until after his death; but the time had now come, and on the 4th of January 1652 she left her home for ever. This departure has been described to us in terms of a wonderful sober eloquence by Madame Périer. "The day beforehand", says Madame Périer, "my sister asked me to give my brother some hint of her intention, so that he should not be taken too much by surprise. I was as careful as I could . . . but he was very much distressed, and went off to his room without seeing my sister. . . . I gave her the message he had left with me, and then we, too, went to bed. But although I fully approved of what she was doing. . . . I was so much overcome that I did not close my eyes all night. About seven o'clock, as she showed no signs of stirring, I thought that perhaps she had not slept, and went over to her bed and found her fast asleep. The noise I made woke her, and she asked what time it was. I told her, and she said she felt very well and had had an excellent night. Then she got up and dressed with perfect calmness and self-control. We did not bid each other good-bye, for fear of breaking down; indeed, I hurried out of the way, when I saw she was ready to start. Thus did my sister leave the world in the seven and twentieth year of her age."¹

There was unfortunately a less heroic side to this episode, in which Pascal plays a part which strikes one with painful surprise. As was usual in such cases, Jacqueline intended to

¹ Quoted from St. Cyres' translation (*Pascal*, p. 134).

bring with her to Port-Royal her share of her father's property, the taking of the veil being always considered equivalent to marriage, as regards the disposal of the dowry. Pascal objected to this, and began by virtually refusing to take the necessary steps for the releasing of her wealth, writing a letter which jars unpleasantly on our ears. Why did he on this matter of money adopt a grasping and worldly attitude? Probably because his scientific research and general way of life were, as a matter of fact, expensive. His sister and he had hitherto pooled their resources; he was finding his income diminished by half, just at a time when he particularly needed money for the development of his calculating-machine. He yielded after a little while, his love for his sister proving ultimately stronger than any other force; but the event shows how weak a hold religion had on him. The money was after all to go to the work of Port-Royal and to a Jansenist cause; no convinced Jansenist would have allowed his reluctance or any legal quibbles to stand in the way. The immediate result of this episode was a definite breach between Pascal and the Jansenists. He seems to have resented the exigencies of Port-Royal, while they saw only in him a man of the world, still given up to vanity and entertainment.

This judgement was not without some justification, for we now come to the twenty months of Pascal's life which have always been described as his "worldly period". "Worldliness" is of course a relative term. What one would call dissipation might be puritan boredom to another. We cannot imagine Pascal, with his sober tastes and keen intelligence, really giving himself up to futile pursuits or indulging in low tastes. In no sense, for one thing, did he "sow his wild oats", or live in a manner of which he would later be ashamed. What is clear is that during those months religion ceases to play any part in his life. Some outward conformity doubtless remained,

but he gives up any attempt at a supernatural explanation of the universe, and endeavours to find complete satisfaction not only in scientific pursuits (which at times begin to pall), but in a more varied and gay society than that to which he has been accustomed. We know that during these two years he mixed in a thoroughly worldly set, frequented fashionable drawing-rooms, gambled mildly, was very fond of the stage, particularly amateur theatricals, and enjoyed the society of ladies.

We may here deal with one point about which much has been written, all to no definite conclusion. Was Pascal ever in love, did he ever seriously contemplate marriage?

As far as we can tell, from one or two allusions, he seems to have vaguely contemplated the possibility of marriage in the abstract, but as to the further statement that he was actually a candidate for the hand of two ladies, all that can be said is that the evidence is inadequate. It is probably about this time that he wrote, assuming that he was its author, the *Discourse on the Passion of Love*, but there is little in that essay which is not purely academic; the utmost that can be said is that some passages do seem to imply that the writer, at one time or other, vaguely felt something of what we may call a sentimental affection for the other sex. There is certainly nothing to warrant the supposition that only one who had experienced passion at its highest could have written it. Besides, it remains to be proved that Pascal wrote it.¹

The most intimate friends of Pascal during these years (1652 and 1653) were two well known Society leaders, Miton and Méré. Miton, who appears in La Bruyère's *Characters*, was a great gambler, an utter sceptic, the last person one would have expected to appeal to a serious-minded person like Pascal. He was, however, a brilliant talker and Pascal was

¹ Most modern critics admit the probable authenticity of the *Discourse*.

evidently very fond of his company, without having been much under his influence.

Méré, however, is a more important person; a great lover of the classics and of moral literature, a great traveller, very keen on philosophy and on debate, he is typical of the thoroughly respectable believer in the goodness of human nature, in the capacity of man to rise above circumstances and to direct his own life. He is the type of what the French call an "honnête homme", the seventeenth-century gentleman, moderate in all things, polite, cultured, and, one may say, in practice if not in theory, absolutely godless. St. Cyres calls him "one of the first representatives of a new calling—the professional diners-out and specialists in good manners . . . who studied the ways of a drawing-room much as mystical writers studied the laws of the interior life".¹ He introduced Pascal to an entirely new set of acquaintances, dissuading him from over-insistence on mathematics and from an exaggerated belief in the finality of the physical world.

The most important of Pascal's friends, however, just then is the Duc de Roannez. Roannez was at that time governor of Poitou; he was a young man and Pascal became attached to his household as a kind of unofficial private secretary. Was he in need of the salary, since the diminution of his income after his father's death? Was he simply disinclined to live alone (we know he actually lived with the Duke for some time)? This we cannot tell. What is certain is that a warm friendship sprang up between the two young men, that for some time they were virtually inseparable, and that both the Duke and his sister were ultimately to be among the first of Pascal's disciples. Pascal accompanied Roannez on a journey to his province²

¹ St. Cyres, p. 139.

² Méré writes that "the Duke had brought with him a man of uncertain age, then little known, though since become notorious. He was a great mathematician and little else. But science does not teach polite behaviour,

and seems to have been introduced by him to a higher class of aristocracy than he had ever met before; it is probably to this period in his life that we have to trace the origin of some of his thoughts concerning noble birth and aristocracy. It is impossible not to find an echo of this in his remark that "a young nobleman of 18 is as well known and as much listened to as a really learned man of 50, thus getting 30 years start".

What was Pascal thinking and feeling during his years as a man about town? Of all this we have little or no record. The one thing that we know is that after a while the hollowness of this existence began to pall upon him. Those years were, it must be remembered, years of upheaval in France. The civil wars of the Fronde had been raging for some time and, although they scarcely disturbed the even tenor of a daily life like Pascal's, they could not but impress him with their futility as well as give to existence an uncertainty which reflects itself in his sensitive temperament. He is not happy during these two years; society has really little to offer to a man of his mental powers; the world is upside down, nothing seems sure or worth while. "For more than a year", wrote his sister in September, 1654, "he had had a great contempt of the world and an almost insurmountable disgust for the people who belong to it. . . . Partly owing to his utter disgust with the folly and entertainment of the world, partly owing to the prompting of his conscience, he felt utterly detached from all the things of the world as he never had before. On the other hand he seemed to have been utterly abandoned by God; he felt no attraction towards Him, and although he endeavoured

and the man had neither taste nor feeling. . . . But before he got to Poitiers he had begun to talk very sensibly; we would hardly have expressed ourselves better." Does this refer to Pascal? We are inclined to follow M. Strowski in his denial.

to look in that direction he felt he was prompted to do so by his own reason and mind."

In this weariness of worldly pursuits and fashionable society, Pascal began by turning back to what in previous times had brought him true and deep satisfaction, not to religion, but to Science. He plunged once more into the mathematics from which he had been dissuaded by his worldly advisers, and during the winter of 1653-4 published a large number of treatises, dealing with the integral calculus, of which he may be said to have laid the foundations, with the calculation of probabilities, and with the fundamental conceptions of mathematical reasoning, the last contained partly in his letters to Fermat, a fellow-mathematician, and partly in a treatise entitled *The Geometrical Mind*. It is clear from all these that his temporary desertion of mathematical research has not weakened his hold on the subject; in many ways, those treatises are the most original and creative part of his work.

CHAPTER III

Conversion

“MATHEMATICS may be the finest exercise of the human mind, but they are nothing more; they do not provide an adequate end for the work of the mind.”

Thus Pascal to his friend Fermat towards the end of his life, confessing in those few words the failure of science to satisfy the deepest need of his soul. Whither, after all, did mathematics ultimately lead? Did they explain anything? They left unsolved the real problems of existence—and yet some solution to these *must* be found.

But, it may be asked, had Pascal not already found his answer to those problems? Had he not been a Christian for some years? Even if his faith had become somewhat lukewarm, surely his hold on Christianity itself had not relaxed?

It is evident that our interpretation of the spiritual struggles of the year 1654, and of the nature of his second and final conversion, must depend on our view of his earlier conversion and subsequent experience. We would trace a twofold process in Pascal from 1646 to 1653. Firstly, a gradual dying-down of a certain enthusiasm for religious things awakened at Rouen on his first contact with the Jansenists. Pascal is not the first Christian who lost his first love owing to “the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches”. And this spiritual

coldness was—invariably—accompanied by doubt. We cannot accept the verdict of several eminent scholars who state that “at no time of his life, not even in his worldly period, was Pascal ever rebellious to the authority of the Christian revelation, or even tormented by doubt; and that he never allowed himself to be shaken by any of the rational objections he may have heard around him”.¹

Such an opinion seems to us based on an inadequate understanding of religious psychology. It is possible for some shallow people to maintain for ever a rigid barrier between their faith and their intellect, and (as far as they think at all) to go on believing with their minds when their heart has ceased to look on religion as something important. But that a great mind like Pascal should have been able for long to maintain unshaken his belief in Christianity as a system, while his heart was wandering away from God, we cannot accept. Pascal himself tells us of the close connection between the will to believe and actual belief—and he speaks from experience. Slacken the personal links that bind the soul to God, relax your personal devotional life, let the world reinvade your soul, and doubt will come, inexorably, surely. You may be barely conscious of it, but it will be there. Or, what is almost more tragic perhaps, you will *try* and doubt: you will *want* Christianity not to be true, because of its demands. But in one way or another, you must, if you are a logical being, desire to harmonise your inner life and your intellectual life, your mind and your soul.

One thing is certain, that during the year 1654 Pascal tries to find if some other solution than that of Christianity be not possible to the problem of human existence, and turns to philosophy. He plunges into the writings, first of Epictetus, then of Montaigne.

¹ Giraud, *Vie héroïque de Blaise Pascal*, p. 81.

Considering how widespread was the vogue of Stoicism, it is no wonder that he should have turned to it for a guide in his mental perplexities, not indeed to the watered-down Stoicism that was fashionable, but to the original teaching of its founder. But he did not find this was going to take him very far: its essential tenet was, after all, to find in yourself a source of energy. Place yourself above circumstances, trust in the strength of your will, that will which is stronger than any force. "I have never been prevented from doing what I wished to do, nor forced to do what I did not wish to do," boasted Epictetus. But that, said Pascal, has no help, for me. It is precisely my own failure which is the cause of my trouble: "The things that I should do, I do not, and the things that I should not do, these I do. Miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Not yet does he answer, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord". He has not yet gone back to the experience of 1646. Epictetus has failed him, but he turns to another human teacher. It was perhaps inevitable that he should have made one more attempt at a purely human solution of his problem by trying to see what help Montaigne could give him. The *Essays* were being widely read by all Pascal's friends; it was natural that he should give them a trial.

Montaigne has been commonly described as a sceptic, a doubter in the possibility of any certainty, confessing that in the last resort nothing can be definitely known. This view, on the whole, seemed to fit Pascal's despondency and perplexities better than the proud independence of Stoicism. At any rate, Montaigne did not invite him to find in his weakness the source of his strength; he allowed him to give up the wearisome struggle, the anxious search. Besides, there is another side to Montaigne; his scepticism is not the whole of him, there are echoes of a faith in something outside man, allusions to the

Christian faith as lifting man out of himself. But all this was very vague.

It happened that some months after his conversion Pascal was asked by M. de Saci, one of the Port-Royal theologians, what was the value of writers such as Epictetus and Montaigne, whom he was known to have studied closely, and how far his new Christian experience had altered his view about them. Lengthy notes were subsequently taken of Pascal's reply, and these have come down to us under the title of *Pascal's Talk with M. de Saci*.

Both these philosophers, in Pascal's eyes, have grasped half the truth concerning human nature. The ancient Greek has seen that ultimately the free will of man is the key to man—the centre of personality. He was really a very great man. He saw the duty of man and the dignity of man. "In fact," says Pascal, "I would venture to say he would deserve to be worshipped, had he realised how powerless he was, since God only can teach men both their duty and their helplessness. For lack of realising this helplessness Epictetus has made of man a god and allowed himself to be carried away by a devilish pride."

With Montaigne we get the other side of the picture. The realisation of man's incapacity and the despairing question—Is anything worth while? He turns upon every human opinion the batteries of relentless criticism. He has soon demonstrated the hollowness of every human philosophy, including the philosophy of the human soul.

"I must confess", says Pascal, "I cannot help rejoicing at seeing proud reason irresistibly beaten down by its own weapons—that revolt of man against man."

Epictetus and Montaigne thus represent the topmost points of the two great rival philosophies of the unaided human reason:¹

¹ "Not in vain did Pascal hold out Stoicism on the one hand and a certain Epicurean scepticism on the other as being the two poles of thought and

the one only seeing the greatness of man and the other only his wretchedness, both failing to realise that man is a fallen being. But it must not be thought that each of these half-truths contradicts or excludes the other. Both these half-truths are wholly true, but neither is the whole truth. They need uniting in the one great living truth, Jesus Christ, the God-man, revealing to man both his greatness and his helplessness, and giving him the power which he lacks, as well as the vision of the things which he ought to do.

Pascal, however, has not yet grasped this answer. Neither Epictetus nor Montaigne have satisfied him, and he is still miserable. At last, in September 1654, when on a visit to his sister at Port-Royal he breaks down in a most complete manner, telling her how weary he was of everything, how he longed for his former knowledge of God, and how guilty he had been for having resisted God's grace and working in him in former times.

This talk with his sister seems to have been as it were a knife opening a long festering wound, the relieving of a long pressure. He began to pay frequent visits to Port-Royal. "He came so often", says his sister, "staying for such a long time, that I seemed to have no time left for any other occupation. Not that I exercised any kind of pressure upon him," she adds, "*but I seemed to see him grow into some one whom I did not*

philosophy of the ancient world; . . . of the thought and philosophy of mankind still unclothed with Christianity, still secular, a lay mankind, mankind still dependent on its own sole strength. Stoicism was, as it were, the secular pole of all that was heroic and sacred, just as Epicurean scepticism was the secular pole of all that was lax, soft, and secular. Pascal saw that in the ancient world Stoicism was the one thing that was comparable to Christianity, that could bear the brunt of its attack, that was worthy of it; that Stoicism had been entrusted with the task of giving to the ancient world its meed of sacredness, of giving it what could be the lay, the temporal herald of the saint and the martyr. . . . Like all great Christians, Pascal was careful not to despise the ancient world" (Péguy, *Œuvres*, ix. p. 186).

know, and I think you will have the same feeling about him if God continues His work in him, particularly a growth in humility, in submission, in self-distrust and self-contempt, in a desire to die, as it were, in the esteem and memory of men."

Two months thus passed. What is happening exactly in Pascal's soul? His later *Thoughts* will enlighten us as to the process of the inner change in him: his insistence upon religion depending on the submission of the will, on the crushing of self. His self is gradually dying during those weeks: he is crucifying himself, his ambitions, his desires—even his good desires. He is gradually separating himself by prayer and meditation from everything which is not God. He is allowing, as it were, the love of God to burn up in him whatever is contrary to God's will.

We find an echo of his experiences in his *Prayer for the right use of illness*, which most commentators ascribe to this period: "O Lord, Thou gavest me health to serve Thee, and I made a profane use if it. Now Thou sendest me illness; may I not use it in angering Thee by my impatience. . . . Make me incapable of enjoying the world . . . that world, so delightful and so criminal in its use. . . . My heart is so hardened and full of the ideas, cares, anxieties and bonds of the world, that neither good nor ill-health, nor words, nor books, nor the Sacred Scriptures, nor the Gospels, nor the holiest mysteries, nor alms, nor fastings, nor mortifications, nor miracles, nor the Sacraments, nor the sacrifice of Thy Body, nor all my efforts, nor those of the whole world, can do anything to begin my conversion, if Thy Grace will not give its assistance to all these—Therefore I call to Thee, O God. To whom would I cry if not to Thee? All that is not God fails to fulfil my expectation. It is God Himself that I seek and ask for; it is to Thee, O God, that I apply in order to obtain Thee."

With all the ardour of his being Pascal is thus seeking God

—but God seems, as it were, to be hiding himself from the seeker. In vain does Pascal do what he states in the *Thoughts* to help conversion—act as if God existed, even if you are not sure—go to Church and confession, pray, meditate; none of these things bring peace, and he experienced in his way what may have been meant by our Lord in the familiar words, “I came not to bring peace but a sword”. Pascal has described, in a treatise called *The Sinner’s Conversion*, the process by which the soul accepts God. “When God teaches a soul”, he writes, “He first gives him an entirely new outlook of all things and of Himself. This new light brings to him fear, and a restlessness which destroys the rest it found in the things which were then its delight. These things he can no longer enjoy, for that enjoyment is perpetually troubled by scruples. But on the other hand he does not feel any peace in religious things. In fact, he finds in them even more bitterness than in the vanities of the world. He is thus torn asunder and can find nothing in himself but confusion. If, however, he does not relinquish his quest and endeavours to try and find God above himself and outside himself, then he realises that nothing will satisfy him, nothing here below or in heaven and all angels, save God Himself. Then he finds Him; he reaches the Throne of God and finds there what is altogether lovely and which cannot be taken from him without his own consent.”

“Be of good cheer; thou wouldst not be seeking me if thou hadst not already found me.”¹ However far God might seem, He was really at hand, and, unconsciously, Pascal had been, in pain and weariness, destroying the obstacles to the shining of His light. He stood on the threshold of conversion, his quest was about to come to an end. On the 22nd November, late in the evening, he was alone in his room praying and meditating, when there suddenly came upon him one of those

¹ “The Mystery of Jesus” (Thought 554).

experiences which St. Paul probably meant when he referred to "being carried into the seventh heaven". Such experience Pascal seems to have immediately transmitted to writing in a document which never left him but which he wore carried round his neck as a talisman, and on which all comment would be futile.

In the year of grace 1654
Monday the 23d of November, feast of St. Clement,
Pope and martyr, and others of the Martyrology,
Vigil of St. Chrysogone, martyr, and others,
from about half-past ten in the evening to about half-past
twelve

FIRE

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,"
Not of philosophers and scholars,
Certainty, Joy, Certainty, Feeling, Light, Joy,
God of Jesus-Christ,
Deum meum et Deum vestrum (John xx. 17)
Thy God will be my God (Ruth)
Forgetting of the world and of all save God.
He is only to be found in the ways taught in the Gospel.
Greatness of the human soul.
O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I
have known Thee (John xvii.)
Joy, joy and tears of Joy.
I have become separated from him,
Dereliquerunt me fontes aquae vivae.
"My God wilt thou forsake me?"
May I not be separated from him for ever.
"This is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true
God and him thou hast sent, Jesus Christ"
Jesus-Christ

Jesus-Christ.

I have become separated from him, I have fled from him,
renounced him, crucified him.

May I never be separated from him.

He is only to be kept by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Total and sweet renunciation surrender.

Total submission to Jesus-Christ and to my director.

Eternally in joy for one day's trial on earth.

Non obliviscar sermones tuos. Amen.

Pascal has now answered his own question. No longer does he despairingly ask: "Which I would not do, that I do. The good that I would do, I do not. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer has now come: "I thank God through Jesus-Christ our Lord". Pascal is now a Christian.

It was not, however, until some weeks after that he told Jacqueline of the change that had come over him and decided to make any outward change in his manner of life. For the present his visits to Port-Royal continued; he got to know its inhabitants better, more particularly the abbé Singlin, a sermon of whom seems to have made a profound impression upon him.¹ He then came to the conclusion that it would be wise for him to spend some time in complete retirement from the world, and therefore decided on a period of retreat at Port-Royal,

¹ There are two interpretations of M. Singlin's sermon. Some put it on the 21st November, and make it the immediate cause of Pascal's conversion. Another tradition is that this sermon was preached on the 8th December, and was the cause not of Pascal's conversion, but of his choosing M. Singlin as his spiritual director. The latter account is that of Pascal's niece, but her testimony has so often proved to be inaccurate that little reliance can be put upon it. On the other hand, the other tradition represented by Port-Royal is too much on what we might call the lines of orthodox experience to be unquestioningly accepted. A sermon determining a conversion is the every day Jansenist and revivalist experience; it is too much what one would expect. On the whole, the latter account would appear the more likely.

where he took his abode on January 7th, 1655, as one of the solitary brethren of the community.

Pascal seems to have been received at Port-Royal very much as St. Paul by the early Church—with a joy not unmixed with a little fear and a wonder whether the new fish would not prove so big as to break the net. Port-Royal, as we saw, disliked too much rationalisation, too much of the scientific spirit; it was suspicious of overmuch learning of a worldly kind. These suspicions never entirely disappeared. The gentlemen of Port-Royal never felt Pascal to be "one of them". They may have divined that a mind like his could never entirely abjure its outlook and methods, that he remained a scientist and, in a sense, a man of the world; that he had not got the vocation of a solitary life.

That year at Port-Royal seems, however, to have been a time of great peace and happiness for Pascal. Apart from the inner peace of surrender, there was the restful calm of the countryside, the forgetting of mathematical disputes and scientific rivalries, the joyous atmosphere; for Port-Royal seems to have been a very happy place; its inmates knew the peace of those who have given up all and received all in exchange. "I am glad at finding you so gay in your solitude," wrote Jacqueline, "but I wonder how far M. de Saci likes so cheerful a penitent."

How did Pascal actually spend his time? We know, from his sister, that he adopted a severely ascetic type of life, eating with a wooden spoon out of an earthen vessel, and, abandoning his habits of comfort, went to the other extreme and "placed brooms in the category of superfluous furniture". Curiously enough, rough food and early rising began by bringing him a temporary amelioration in health, "Christ proving a better doctor than Hippocrates". Unfortunately, this improvement was only temporary.

His main occupation seems to have been teaching. He taught one of his Périér nephews, who was in a neighbouring Jansenist school, and he came sufficiently into contact with young children to take the trouble of devising a new reading method which seems to have been a great success. But much of his time was, of course, spent in study, prayer, and meditation.

“Before we pass on to the next chapter in Pascal’s life, let us, as it were, take stock of him during the last week of that year 1655. He is thirty-two, prematurely aged by disease, even more probably by the feverish activity of his mind, the perpetual tenseness of his soul. It is impossible to go near him without realising the extraordinary originality of the man, the amazing combination of the rarest gifts, making this genius an exceptional being, a king in the realm of thought. He has the rare capacity of causing some fresh truth to spring from whatever he takes up, without ever losing himself in the purely abstract: he is always able, on the contrary, to bring out what is concrete, what is a living, immediate reality. His mathematical and physical work has put him in the forefront of the scientists of his and of all times, but the same mastery appears in his mental researches along the line of philosophy, moral or religious. The writings hitherto published already tend to reveal a master of style and even a poet in prose. At the same time, he has a knowledge of the world and of men, not only of books. He has lived much and suffered much, and suffering has deepened and broadened his soul. The very history of that soul is to be one of the richest chapters in the religious experience of humanity. For a long time he thought he could reconcile an overwhelming passion for science, and life, and fame, and society with an outward belief in Christianity. He then came into contact with the harsh and overwhelming claims of God. For a little while he bowed before

these, then gradually he slipped back into the thralldom of the world, the joys of the mind, the pride of life, and lost contact with God himself, who abandoned him to these pleasures. But God at last had pity upon him, upon his waywardness, and He made a last effort to win him back to himself. This time Pascal yielded and gave to his God a welcome he was never to deny. He will now follow Him to the end.”¹

But Pascal remains what he has been so far, a scientist and a layman. It is as such that God is to use him. He never seems to have believed that God’s Will for him might lie along any other line. At this time he is also a Jansenist in so far as it is through Jansenists that Christianity has become to him the religion of life and not something formal and unreal. Further, Jansenist austerity, Jansenist thoroughness, are in harmony with his logic and passion for taking everything to the full.

As it happens, immediately after his conversion, that body of Christians to whom he owes his faith find themselves involved in a new conflict, raising under cover of difficult issues, problems to which, for Pascal, there could be no two solutions. In their difficulties the Jansenists are going to need a champion—a spokesman. When they turn to him he will be ready with his “Here am I, send me”.

¹ Giraud, *Vie héroïque*, p. 102.

BOOK III

THE DEFENDER OF PORT-ROYAL

CHAPTER I

The Five Propositions

“CURSED be thy rest”, said Farel to Calvin, when the latter announced his intention of abandoning for the quiet of a chair of theology at Strasburg the arduous task of building up a Protestant Church at Geneva. No more than Calvin was Pascal to be allowed to bury himself in study and meditation. A violent attack was about to be made on Port-Royal, and it was the latest recruit on whom the burden of defence was going to fall.

We have already seen how Port-Royal, going outside its original scheme of moral and spiritual reform, had, through St. Cyran and mainly through Arnauld, become the stronghold of Jansen's theology of Grace, thus leading the opposition to Molina's teaching as adopted by the Jesuits; and how the quarrel had been dragging on for years between the two parties. The matter had remained at first largely academic, partly because the questions at issue were so abstruse, partly because there were many people in the Church who, while agreeing in the main with the Jesuits, were reluctant to give open support to a party whose other activities they had strong reasons for disliking.

But it was impossible for this state of truce to continue. The Jansenists, not realising the danger they were running in thus inviting attack, had no intention of keeping their light

under a bushel, and would not have allowed the matters at issue to lie dormant, even had their adversaries been so disposed. But the actual resumption of hostilities came from a third party, the University of Paris.

In 1649 Cornet, the syndic of the Faculty of Theology in Paris, published and deferred to the Faculty for judgement five propositions purporting to be a summary of Jansenist teaching. As these five propositions were to be for years a battle-ground, it may be as well to give them in full:

1. There are certain divine commandments which it is impossible for the just to obey as they have not sufficient Grace.

2. In the state of fallen nature, there can be no resistance to interior Grace.

3. For merit or demerit after the fall, it is not necessary for man to have interior liberty; it is enough that he be exempt from external constraint.

4. The semi-Pelagians admit the necessity of an interior and prevenient Grace, even for the first act of grace; but they were heretical in their view that this grace would be controlled by the human will.

5. It is a semi-Pelagian heresy to say that Christ died for all men without exception.

Now, these propositions were never accepted by Jansenists as a fair and accurate summary of their opinions. They did not dispute that these five propositions were indeed heretical. What they did deny was that they represented Jansenist teaching, thus drawing the famous distinction between the *right* of condemning the propositions as heretical and the *fact* of their being true statement of Jansenism.

It was perfectly certain that the five propositions would be condemned by the Faculty. Arnauld and his friends therefore busied themselves with the double task of protesting against their identification with Jansenism and with the defence

of what they considered to be true Jansenist teaching. Unfortunately they went too far. Instead of keeping the controversy on strictly theological or philosophical grounds, they took the line that there had been a deliberate plot, not to condemn real heresy, but to condemn the Jansenists, whether they were heretical or not, because they had incurred the enmity of the powerful order of the Jesuits. The line taken was that the Jansenists were in fact the victims of a conspiracy, and that is where the mistake was made.

The five propositions were condemned by a Papal Bull on the 19th June 1653. More than ever, however, did the Jansenists try and maintain their distinction between fact and right, and the flood of pamphlets continued unabated. The whole controversy became yet more violent when in January 1655 the Duc de Liancourt was refused absolution by his parish priest on the ground of his alleged Jansenist leanings. Arnauld rushed into print with two letters, the first "to a noble person", the second "to a Duke and Peer of France". He repeated the distinction between fact and right, and carried on a fresh attack against the Molinist teaching of sufficient grace. His pamphlets were deferred to the Faculty of Theology and by the end of the year it became evident that they too were going to be condemned.

CHAPTER II

The Theological Attack

FEELING that the issues raised far exceeded the limits of mere theological controversy but were of fundamental importance to every individual, Port-Royal determined to appeal more directly to the opinion of the man in the street. Arnauld therefore tried his hand at another more popular kind of pamphlet. He read it to his friends and found it listened to politely enough, but with no enthusiasm. "I can see," he said, "that you do not think much of it. Neither do I." Then looking round him his eye fell upon young Pascal who had been standing by listening. "Now," said he, "you are young. You can write. You ought to do something!" Pascal said he would try. A few days later he came back with a manuscript which his friends pronounced to be excellent. It was slightly revised, and on the 27th January 1656 there was sold in Paris an eight-page pamphlet entitled *A letter written by an Inhabitant of Paris to a Provincial friend of his on the matter of the present quarrels in the University*.

From the very first line Pascal goes straight to the heart of the subject. "We have made a bad mistake," he says. "I only found it out yesterday. I thought until now that the quarrel in the Sorbonne had been about something that really mattered to religion. You will therefore be greatly surprised to find out what all this pother comes to. There are two points

at issue. The first is to know whether M. Arnauld was right or wrong for having said in his letter that 'he has read the book of Jansenius and that he did not find in it the five propositions condemned by the Pope; but that as he condemns these propositions wherever they are to be found, he condemns them in Jansenism if they are found there'. The question is, therefore, was it rash of him to seem to intimate thereby that the propositions are not in Jansenius, although the Bishops declare they are? On this point seventy-one doctors of theology take his part, eighty doctors and forty monks condemn him, and fifteen are neutral. So much for the first matter. Anyway, this is not very important. After all, if I did want to find out if the five propositions are in Jansenius, his book is not too big or too scarce for me to get hold of it and see for myself. But if I were not afraid of being as rash as M. Arnauld I should agree with the many people who begin to doubt whether, after all, the propositions be in Jansenius, since nobody is prepared apparently to show them there in black and white. However, this is not a matter of faith. I now come to what *is* a matter of faith. M. Arnauld practically said in the same letter that the divine grace, without which we can do nothing, failed St. Peter when he fell. Now I thought that the whole problem was whether or not grace be given to all men, as the Jesuits say, or whether it be only efficacious in certain cases as the Jansenists claim. Ah! but I was making a mistake. I have become a great theologian in a very few days as you are going to see. I went off to Dr. N——, a learned theologian who is most zealous against Jansenists, and asked him to pronounce whether grace has not been given to all men.

"'No,' he said, 'certainly not. Such an opinion is highly problematical, and St. Augustine has said rightly that grace is not given to all men.'

"'I am sorry,' I said, 'if I misunderstood you. Won't

you condemn then this opinion, which is ascribed to Jansenists, that grace is efficacious and determines our right and wrong doing?’

“‘Certainly not,’ he said, ‘that is a most orthodox position.’

“‘Wherein then,’ said I, ‘is M. Arnauld’s heresy?’

“‘It is,’ he said, ‘in that he does not admit that the righteous have the power to accomplish what is right and ordered by God in the way in which we understand it.’

“‘Having found at last the real crux of the matter, I went off and saw another friend of mine who is a Jansenist, but I found myself no better off when I suggested as a definition of the problem a formula which they condemn as highly heretical, and only held by Lutherans and Calvinists; upon which I discovered that I had become too good a Jansenist after previously being too good a Molinist. I then went back to my first theologian friend and told him that I thought he and the Jansenists would soon come to an agreement.

“‘Stop!’ he says, ‘you must be a theologian to see the real points at issue. The difference between us is so subtle that we can hardly define it, and you certainly would not understand it. The point,’ he said, ‘is this: We are all agreed that the righteous have always the capacity to fulfil the commands of God, but to us the capacity is “immediate” and to them it is not. That is the point.’

“‘I never heard that term before, and I really believe that it has only been invented in order to make the whole confusion worse confounded. However, I went off with it to my Jansenist friend and asked him whether he believed in this ‘immediate’ power. He laughed and said:

“‘Tell me yourself, what you mean by it.’

“‘I mean by it what the Molinists mean.’

“‘Oh!’ he said, ‘which Molinists?’

“‘I said that to me they were all one mind and one body, to

which he answered: 'How little you know about it! They are absolutely divided on this and almost everything else, but they are united in the intention to destroy M. Arnauld, and therefore they have agreed upon the use of that word "immediate", so as to use the same word, although they really mean different things by it, and thus appear more numerous and more imposing by this apparent unity.'

"Upon my asking him to define the term he said he could not.

"'Go and see,' he said, 'some of their chief people, the neo-Thomists.'

"I therefore went off to see them. I soon found myself tied up in contradictions and was soon convinced that they were as heretical as the Jansenists, and I came to the conclusion that the word 'immediate' had only been invented in order to destroy the Jansenists, and is not to be found in the Fathers of the Church.

"If these disputations interest you I shall continue this in a few days."

Pascal goes on in this strain for three more pamphlets or letters. The success of them was absolutely beyond expectation or description. The lightness of touch, the irony, the sarcasm was something which no one had previously met with in theological disputation. The Chancellor of the Diocese had a stroke and had to be bled seven times. The printer's shop where they had been printed was closed by the police, but the next day a second letter, straight from another press, was brought to the authorities. The letters went on being printed by the thousand, in all kinds of type and on all kinds of paper; bundles were being sent to all corners of France and nobody knew who had written them. A cousin of Pascal had one day a visit from a Jesuit friend who told him that there was a rumour to the effect that Pascal was the author.

At that very moment the proof sheets of the seventh and eighth letters were drying on the bed in that very room.

Why had Pascal rushed into the fray? He had indeed received a direct invitation to do so, but why had he accepted? We have to remember that, given the state of mind of a recent convert, any direct call will tend to be accepted with enthusiasm, whatever be the work, but as a matter of fact there were many reasons why Pascal should welcome it. To begin with, he owed to his new friends, the Jansenists, the instruments of his conversion under God, any help which he might be able to render. Besides, it was not the first time that he happened to find himself on the opposite side to the Jesuits. They had opposed some of his scientific discoveries, they had in fact ridiculed him. He had every reason to believe that they were not over-particular in their methods of fighting. He was not in the least sorry of this opportunity of attacking them upon another battle-field.

And this battle was one for which he was particularly suited. There were after all two points at issue, both of them vital in his eyes. The first a point of logic: the whole trouble was due to a deliberate lack of logical definition and of clear thinking. The question after all was simple and straightforward enough. Were the propositions a fair summary of Jansenism or not? Any honest-thinking man could easily say "yes" or "no" to that question, and all the distinctions which were being drawn were simply mentally dishonest. What was needed was sincerity and accurate definition. Who was better fitted for such defining than a mathematician, to whom slovenly thinking, confusion, hair-splitting, were anathema? The scientist rejoiced at this unique opportunity of showing the application of scientific methods to philosophy, theology, and morals.

But there was something more. Behind these disputations, what was the real point at issue? It was the question of free

will and divine grace. What had the Molinists apparently declared? That unaided man was capable of saving himself. Against this Pascal's conscience and past protested loudly. Man capable of saving himself? Man capable of being good unaided, when every honest person knew that the struggle against sin was a daily, hourly agony? That time after time he would have fallen had it not been for divine grace? It was not a matter even of intellectual honesty; it was a matter of the plainest religious truth. No, says Pascal, the human will is desperately weak. No one more than he has wanted to do good, and be good; no one more than he has tried and failed. Was not his deliverance due to divine grace and nothing else? Molinist teaching is not merely confused, merely illogical; it is a denial of the most elementary facts of spiritual experience, and Pascal is but too eager to contradict it and denounce its falseness.

This analysis of the first Provincial Letter shows us the line that Pascal is going to take. He is not going to discuss the precise orthodoxy of this or that idea. He is not a theologian. He might unknowingly make mistakes, take a wrong line; besides which, the man in the street is not a theologian either. It is no use resorting to over-subtle arguments with him, for behind all those arguments there are two straightforward issues: one a matter of sheer fact and another a matter of elementary morals.

"The truth is," he says, "Molinists and Thomists are really enemies on purely theological grounds, but they have found grounds for reconciliation in a common enmity. There is nothing like a common foe to make people friends. That common enemy is Port-Royal, represented for the time being by M. Arnauld. He is the enemy, not because of his theology, but because Port-Royal is taking away disciples from Jesuits and Thomists, and because of its moral purity. It is intellectually

honest. Its magnificent teaching work is undermining the influence of the more official bodies. Therefore Port-Royal must be destroyed. It does not matter what Port-Royal really believes. The main thing is to find some formula which may seem heretical, with which to brand Port-Royal. 'Give a dog a bad name and hang it.' If you call M. Arnauld a heretic for long enough you will end by spreading the belief that he really is a heretic, and it is quite easy to call a man a heretic as long as you do not define his heresy. Avoid definition, therefore, be vague, illogical, hair-splitting and in the long run enough of your mud is sure to stick. But what M. Arnauld really thinks does not matter in the least. It is not M. Arnauld's sentiments that are heretical; it is his person."

Having aroused the sympathies of the public for the innocent person of M. Arnauld, Pascal shows, at the risk of self-contradiction, that there is nevertheless a real issue behind all this, and this real issue is a moral one, that of responsibility. It is in the fourth letter that he brings out this argument in full. If you pursue the line of Molinist argument you will soon find yourself admitting that nothing is really sinful, that no divine grace is really necessary;—and that is the end of all real Christianity.

To what extent is all this argumentation quite fair? The answer is that Pascal was probably as fair as one can expect in a controversy of the kind. It is somewhat disingenuous on his part to begin by insisting that the whole matter is hair-splitting and a little later to admit that there is behind it all a real issue; and when in the seventeenth and eighteenth letters he picks up the threads of the purely theological controversy, he admits once more the reality of the quarrel. In fact he virtually changes altogether his standpoint. He endeavours to build up a positive constructive theory of grace and free will, and shows that when he comes to fair theological thinking he is

neither Jansenist nor Molinist but himself. He arrives at the conclusion that on sheer theological grounds the truth is with St. Thomas Aquinas; that the scholastic philosophy of sufficient and efficacious grace is really the key to the whole position, the only way which leaves the human mind free and nevertheless preserves intact the divine grace.

But for the present Pascal abandons theology and at the end of the fourth letter deliberately changes that line of approach and rushes into the entirely different problem of Jesuit morality.

CHAPTER III

The Moral Attack

“I WANT to talk to you,” he says in the fifth letter, “of the morals of those good Jesuit Fathers—those eminently wise and learned men, led by divine wisdom. Do you think that I am jesting? Not in the least. I am only quoting what they say of themselves in one of their books. ‘We are,’ they say, ‘a Society of men or rather of angels, of which Isaiah the prophet spake in those words: “Go ye, swift and light angels”.’ A friend has just showed me what kind of people they really are.

“‘Well,’ I said, aghast at some of the things he pointed out, ‘these must be the notions of just a few and not of the body as a whole.’ It was then that he expounded to me how the mind of the Society really worked, and you will be as glad to hear of it as I was.

“‘If, on the one hand, the Jesuits have maxims which are in full conformity with Evangelical principles, they have others which are not those of Christian austerity, and both are officially published.

“‘How then is it,’ I said, ‘that their superiors give consent to the publication of opposite principles?’

“‘Ah!’ he said, ‘that is what you must learn. Know then that they have not got as an aim the corruption of morals, any more than the reform of morals. Their idea is this: that it

is useful, and even necessary, to the welfare of religion that their influence should extend everywhere, and that they should control all consciences. Since Evangelical and austere principles are useful for some people, they use these when they think it desirable. But as those same principles do not fit the ideas of the majority, they put them aside where most people are concerned, so as to be able to please everybody.

“Having to deal with all sorts and conditions of men, they must have casuists who can deal with this infinite variety. Naturally, if all their casuists believed in loose principles, they would ruin their scheme of impressing everybody, since they would lose those who are really pious and want to be rightly led. At the same time they must be able to deal with all those who do not want a strict rule of life. It is by those obliging and accommodating lines of conduct that they open their arms to everybody. For instance, if some one comes along who wishes to restore ill-gotten gain, they will praise him and tell him his desire is holy. But if somebody else come along who wishes for absolution of his sins without giving anything back, they will easily find the means of providing him with what he wants. Thus they have everything which everybody can need, and can be all things to all men. How do they do it? Through their doctrine of “probabilism” by which they declare that any opinion which is seriously put forward by any one theologian is “probable”, and can therefore be acted upon. Now what kind of things have been held to be probable? Well, for instance, let us turn to the moral theology of the great Escobar, one of their chief authorities. See what Escobar says about fasting. “Is one bound to fast if one cannot sleep without supper? Certainly not! Is one bound to fast if one has become tired out physically in some evil pursuit? Certainly not! Even if the evil was indulged in on purpose to get tired and thus avoid fasting, the same holds good. What about

murder? Murderers are unworthy of the shelter of the Church, but what is a murderer? Only one who has received money in order to kill. If you kill therefore in order to oblige a friend, or in a duel because your honour is challenged, you are guiltless. Again you are supposed to give to the poor out of your superfluous wealth, but whatever you may need to maintain your worldly condition is not superfluous, so that therefore nobody really has any superfluous wealth. Can a priest receive money twice for saying the same Mass? Certainly! Can a servant increase his wages by filling his pockets? Undoubtedly, if he has been compelled to accept low wages and other servants are in a better position."

"How have they come to such magnificent conclusions? By their great discovery of the direction of intention. What matters is the spirit in which you do a thing, the motive. You are told, for instance, that you must not avenge yourself; what then of putting to death somebody who has struck you on the cheek? You must not do it because you hate him, but because you have to keep your honour intact, and in order to avoid the infamy that might result from your doing nothing. A man should not fight a duel, but, if he thought that by refusing a duel he would be accused, not of fearing to kill but of fearing to be killed, and would be called a hen and not a man, then, in order to save his honour, he may find himself on the duelling ground at the hour fixed, with the idea of defending himself if attacked; for there can be no harm in walking about a field and defending yourself if attacked. In fact you may even kill to avoid a blow, if there is no other way. Even priests may kill in defence of their order.'" And so the catalogue continues of every variety of sins condoned by those moral guides.

The violence and bitterness of Pascal's attack was due to the amazing development of the theory of "probabilism". Once any rule may be accepted which is supported by one

theological teacher only, you find yourself moving along a very slippery incline indeed, and in fact probabilism was becoming a real moral danger, as many Catholics realised. The cases which we have been quoting illustrate well enough, even if they be only exceptions, the depth to which moral teaching could sink for the sake of retaining in the Church a few whom more rigidity would have driven out.

Nor was this looseness expounded only in obscure textbooks, inaccessible to the laity. Escobar's *Moral Theology* reached, in 1656, its forty-second edition, and Father Bauny's *Sum of Sins*, written in French, not Latin, ran through six editions, and the author himself felt obliged to draft some of his most delicate decisions in Latin, lest, as he naïvely states, "they might be known by the people and give them excuses for an unpraiseworthy freedom". It would be difficult to "give the show away" more artlessly.

Pascal was of course accused of inaccuracy and misrepresentation (the Letters have been called by Chateaubriand an "immortal lie" and Pascal himself a "slanderer of genius"), but on all the points of detail these accusations have been more than disproved by modern criticism, and it is obvious enough that in the circumstances under which he wrote, Pascal would not have dared to risk being caught out for altering texts. As regards his fairness to his opponents, there is no doubt that he selects on the whole these passages which prove his cause, and does not go out of his way to quote what might make for the other side. But he nowhere goes outside the point of the controversy, and is sharp enough indeed at keeping to the essentials. The more fundamental criticism, that Pascal put forward as official teaching what was in fact only the opinion of isolated teachers, falls to the ground when one looks at it a little closely. The essence of probabilism was precisely that one opinion of a single isolated teacher might be followed if

convenient, in preference to the more probable teaching of any number of other teachers. If on any point of real difficulty text-books had insisted on confessors following the judgment of the majority, particularly when the majority held to a strict view, casuistry would not have been a serious moral danger. The whole peril lay precisely in the sanctioning of the single unsupported opinion, even if it advocated a laxer attitude. In a word, Pascal must be held to have fairly represented not only the more extreme evils, but the normal everyday working of the casuistic machine.

It is therefore easy to see why Pascal had suddenly changed the whole subject of the discussion and swung off into this discussion of casuistry. It has been sometimes thought that he was advised to do so on the ground that this line of attack would be more popular in public opinion. But it is questionable whether he did make his later Provincial Letters as entertaining as the earlier ones. The real reason is to be found in the nature of the whole struggle as the Jesuits saw it. It was not, after all, a matter of theology. It was a divergence in fundamental conceptions of religion. What was the religion of the Jansenists? A straight and narrow way, a very difficult way, to which few were called. It was not something which had to be made easy or attractive, because it could only be made so by a denial of the majesty of God. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Religion is hard." That is the fundamental principle of the Jansenists.

In opposition to this, what was the Jesuits' point of view? It is that religion is not to be made too difficult, because if it is you will drive out of the Church people whom it ought to include. Religion should be such that the ordinary man and woman can live it. It must be adaptable to the rank and file. It is no use driving people away by an exaggerated harshness. Is religion a conception of life as a whole, in which it is possible

to lead the ordinary existence which nine men out of ten are called upon to lead? To a Catholic the denial of absolution is a most grievous happening, a step which can only be taken in the most serious circumstances. But if absolution is not to be denied, then moral strictness is impossible. The whole idea of the Jesuit is that not only the monk, but the man of the world must be able to be in the Church and saved. Worldly pursuits are right; man must have the means to live comfortably and easily, and not to crush himself in the pursuit of an impossible virtue. "We must drive nobody out who wishes to stay." That is the essence of the Jesuit point of view. Now if that be so, it is clear that rigid rules must be relaxed, that circumstances must alter cases, that the duty of one will not be the duty of the other.

It is also certain that any religion which insists upon outward forms, *e.g.* Absolution, Communion, Fasting, etc., must unavoidably develop some philosophy of adaptation of strict rules to the necessities of life. And therefore, the defenders of the Jesuits have been able to show quite conclusively that there must be casuistry, that life would be impossible without it, unless again you accept the rigid definition of religion as something to which only a few elects are called.

The tendency of modern criticism has therefore been, while admitting the sincerity of Pascal's motive, to condemn his attitude and declare that he took the wrong side. This condemnation we cannot endorse.

We shall indeed agree with the general judgement that Pascal made two great mistakes. He misinterpreted in the first place the positive aims of casuistry. Its object was not a deliberate making easy of religion. It was not what he often hinted it to be, a deliberate sin against the light. It was also wrong to think that there was a gigantic Jesuit anti-Jansenist plot. That there was a feud between the two sections of the Church

could not be denied, but that the Jesuits really intended to make themselves masters of the Church with a total disregard of all principles is a thesis which cannot now be maintained, at any rate not in the form which Pascal and his friends held it, although subsequent legislation, culminating in the dissolution of the order itself by the Papacy, shows that the Jesuit conspiracy was not altogether the imaginary peril that some make it to be.

We will admit, however, that the motives of the casuists were usually good, and that they sincerely believed that they were working for the glory of God. That may be, but the words of Christ remain, as to the various evil things that men will do thinking thereby to be working for the glory of God. There is no greater foe of ultimate truth than the man who, in all sincerity and conscience, has allowed himself to become persuaded that the Kingdom of God must be promoted by any means, honest or otherwise. The seriousness of this divine warning is not to be brushed aside by the statement that casuistry is to be found in almost any department of life, that rigid affirmations, hard and fast principles, have got to be toned down, moderated to suit circumstances, that life in fact is one long adaptation of abstract principles to the hard facts of existence. No one denies this. We all know that we have to take circumstances into consideration, that the art of compromise is an art, a difficult but an essential one. Compromise can be found in the life of the greatest saints, and there is not one of us who has not at one time or another been forced to have recourse to some form of casuistry.

But when all this has been said, there remains the fundamental difference between the man who only has recourse to casuistry as a last resort, under dire straits, and a seventeenth-century casuist. There is between them a difference of degree, which is really equivalent to difference of quality. Escobar

and his friends may have been sincere, but they were destroying religion, or at any rate religion as Pascal and his friends understood it.

There are probably few people who would not admit that the Jansenists exaggerated one aspect of religion, and gave to their Christianity a hardness, an austerity, that forgot Christ's promise of rest and joy to those that would come to Him. But, however exaggerated, this austerity was, after all, an absolutely essential part of Christianity. If there be one thing that distinguishes the God of the New Testament from the divinities of human imagination, it is that He is a Holy God, that His love is as a consuming fire of all that is impure or unclean. No Christianity is worthy of the name that makes light of the human sin which brought Christ to Calvary.

Of this holiness of God seventeenth-century casuistry was the virtual denial. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," might have been written if not for Escobar himself, at least for thousands of the penitents whom his decisions freed from any real moral effort. It was a period when morality was at a discount. France had been ruled for the last thirty-five years by two cardinal statesmen whose policy had been the faithful carrying out of Machiavelli's principles. "Heathenism was filling up popular imagination," says the Catholic historian Prof. Strowski; "whether in material things, on the stage, in poetry, in public festivals, in luxurious dress, in the pride of life, everything was becoming slowly de-christianised. What remained of morality and decency was swept away in the civil wars of the Fronde, when ambition, and every other passion had free play. Then came an attempt at a religious reaction, under official patronage. It was carried out by the great of the earth and swept many back into the fold of the Church; but these 'conversions' were not due to the warm-hearted, joyful surrender caused by the impact of a really consecrated soul on

another. Both apostles and proselytes were cold, calculating, politically-minded. The new converts had no real Christian feelings; they believed what it was their interest to believe; they did what must be done, and did not do what could be left undone. They changed their habits as little as possible, and endeavoured by every possible subterfuge, to avoid the exigencies of religion. Probabilist casuistry was at their disposal; it was directly contributing to the decay of conscience."¹

The great need was therefore for a reaffirmation of morality as an integral part of Christianity, as a necessary evidence of Christian faith. Jansenism may have been too strict, but it was precisely in its moral appeal that its attraction lay in the eyes of many who were not interested in theological disputations.

This moral protest was in fact but a continuation of the protest of the Protestant reformers. However much Jansen and his followers repudiated any connection with Protestantism, not only were some of their dogmas scarcely distinguishable from those of Calvin, but their puritanism was essentially Calvinistic in its origins and nature. Now we have already seen that one of the causes of the failure of the Reformation was that Protestantism made stricter moral demands than Catholicism. The career of Henry IV. of Navarre is a typical case in point. Half a century later came a fresh protest from the outraged moral conscience of those who saw Christianity increasingly divorced from ethics. Of that divorce Jesuitical casuistry had been a great instrument. The new Puritanism saw perfectly clearly where the root of the evil lay and attacked it.

The attack failed, but with the result that in French Catholicism, and therewith in French civilisation, ethics became permanently reduced to an inferior position. The tragic

¹ Strowski, *Pascal*, iii. pp. 109-112.

fact remains that from the days when Jansenism was defeated, there has been in the French Catholic Church an inadequate stressing of the moral element in religious life, a tendency to separate religion from conduct. That Protestants and Jansenists may have been blind to certain other evils we would not deny, but on the matter at issue in the *Provincial Letters* Pascal was wholly and absolutely right.

Great ecclesiastics such as Bossuet and Bourdaloue could publicly attack vice in scathing terms, could fulminate against those who "placed cushions under the elbows and knees of sinners", but in practice, and probably against their better judgement, they condoned the sins which their hearts and mouths condemned.

This laxity may have been the inevitable result of a natural reluctance to refuse absolution and thus deprive anybody of the sacraments. But the example of some other countries shows that Catholicism can be as morally strict as Protestant puritanism. Why then did French Catholicism allow itself to remain on a definitely lower moral level than that of most other churches?

The reason is to be found, we think, in the fact that it became far too completely the sole religion of the country. By the crushing of Jansenism, by the virtual extirpation of Protestantism from the country, the Church made herself the sole representative of Christianity in France. She had no rival whose stricter practice might induce her to mend her ways out of shame, if for no other reason. While in England first the Puritans, then the Methodists, then the "non-conformist conscience" prevented by their example the official Church from falling too far away from her principles, the French Catholic Church found herself free to take the easier path without any challenge from without. Theoretically, this need not have caused any serious deterioration of her standards;

but in practice we know that no authority, religious or political, seems to keep pure without the wholesome presence of an "alternative Government" or of dissenting Churches.

There was another disastrous consequence of this monopoly of religion enjoyed by the French Catholic Church. As it became identified with Christianity in public opinion, it followed that any attack on the Church became in fact an attack on Christianity as a whole. Even now, when Protestantism is once more on a legal equality with Catholicism, it despairs at times of ever making the man in the street understand that it may be possible to be a Christian without being a Catholic. Catholicism or Free Thought—he sees no alternative. Meanwhile French politics have become poisoned by anti-clericalism, "that by-product of Catholicism",¹ the identification of Democracy with hostility to religion, and they are therefore perpetually swaying from the perils of unethical religion to those of irreligious idealism.

All this, we believe, is due, at the bottom, to the fundamental error that the Kingdom of God can be promoted by non-divine methods, by the reluctance to refuse the services of an ally whose ideals are in fact contrary to yours, but whose help is nevertheless apparently useful at a particular juncture. No one can calculate the harm done to the cause of religion in France by the encouragement the Church has given to statesmen, men of letters, thinkers, who saw in her not a divine institution but a useful instrument of political domination or social order. It is perhaps an exaggeration to trace all these evils to the defeat of Pascal in the battle of the *Provincial Letters* but it is certain that his defeat was a disaster, the results of which were permanent in the religious life of the country.

The *Provincial Letters*, as we have seen, break off in the

¹ Belloc, *The Contrast*.

middle of the nineteenth letter, and conjectures have been varied as to the reason for this abrupt cessation. The main reason, it seems to us, is this: The moral question had been dealt with, and Pascal had come back to theological problems. Now on that issue he no longer felt the ground so solid under his feet. He was less sure of the rightness of the Jansenist dogma. To go on with those discussions meant deliberately identifying himself with Jansenists. He was not prepared to follow this course. He did not belong to Port-Royal. He had said so several times, quite truthfully. He must remain himself, independent. He had done the work which he had been asked to do; it was no use continuing and risking serious misunderstandings between himself and his Port-Royal friends. He took his decision suddenly and acted upon it swiftly.

But why, we may ask, did he no longer feel sure of his theological ground? The answer to this question will be found in a later chapter; but at this juncture it is probably enough to say that he found it increasingly difficult to distinguish clearly between Jansenist dogma and Calvinist predestination. He knew his friends had no intention of being taken for Calvinists, but he felt the whole position confused and so determined to exchange theological controversy for matters in which his position was more secure.

Whatever we may think finally of Pascal's own attitude in this great controversy with the Jesuits, it must be remembered that for a while he seemed to carry public opinion with him. In 1660 an assembly of 1200 Paris priests condemned casuistry. The one serious apology of the Jesuits made in answer to Pascal was equally condemned by the clergy. In 1682 an inquiry was begun into the moral teaching of the Jesuits and, as we have said, less than a hundred years later, the order was officially dissolved, although as a matter of fact the abolition

was never effective. Unfortunately these condemnations were only paper victories. Casuistry remained in fact the victor. As to Pascal's last word on the subject, be it remembered that he said at the very end of his life when in essentials he was no longer a Jansenist: "As to my *Provincial Letters*, I should make them far stronger if I were to write them again".

BOOK IV

THE DEFENDER OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

The Origin of the *Apology*

SOME time in the year 1658, the leaders of Port-Royal gathered together to hear M. Pascal give an outline of a great work on Christian apologetics on which he was known to have been working ever since he had abandoned the *Provincial Letters*. He was said to have so far committed nothing to writing, "having an excellent, not to say prodigious memory, so much so, that he said he never forgot what was once firmly impressed upon his mind;¹ he never feared that thoughts which had come to him could ever escape him and therefore did not trouble to put pen to paper. But", his nephew goes on to say, "they compelled him, if not to write, at least to tell by voice something of what was in his mind on that question. This he did for two or three hours, during which he held his hearers under the spell of an eloquence and of a dominating clarity of thought which made them say that they had never heard anything more beautiful, more powerful, more touching, more convincing."

The lecture must indeed have been a model of clearness and persuasiveness, for although no notes seem to have been taken at the time it was possible for two of his hearers, over

¹ But Nicole states that "Pascal frequently returned from his walks with his finger-nails covered with signs scratched on with a pin, which reminded him of thoughts that might otherwise have escaped him" (Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, iv. p. 598).

ten years afterwards, to put their recollections into an essay. Of those two drafts, one, usually attributed to Filleau de la Chaise, was used as a kind of preface to the earliest editions of Pascal's *Thoughts*; the other, the work of Etienne Périer, superseded Filleau's in all editions published by Port-Royal after 1670, although it is much less complete and less polished than Filleau's. But the drafts are sufficiently in agreement to show that Pascal's scheme was, at least in 1658, perfectly clear in his mind.

On Pascal's death there was found among his belongings an extraordinarily incoherent and confused mass of papers—bits stuck anyhow on larger sheets, illegible scrawlings, disconnected unfinished sentences, all mixed up with passages of different lengths, finished in the most polished style, and evidently standing for the final expression of the writer's mind.

These confused jottings represented the work of the last years of his life. No longer did he trust, if he ever had done, an inerrant memory; with failing health came a diminution of that faculty, as well as the fear that he would never live to complete his great work; and so on every possible occasion he put down whatever came to his mind. He always had pencil and paper by his bedside, and many of these fragments must have been the fruit of hours of pain and insomnia.

The work of classifying those *disjecta membra* into some order fit for publication occupied several years; it was not until 1670, when Jansenist controversies were supposed to have been composed by Pope Clement IX., that the first edition appeared. This was the work of the Port-Royalists, particularly of the Duc de Roannez. It was stated that "while omissions were made of matter that might have stirred up old quarrels, or that were not clear or coherent enough for publication, no alterations would be made". Many editions followed, all based on this first one. But when, nearly two

centuries later, editors went back to the original manuscripts, they found, to quote M. Cousin, that "there were instances of every kind of alteration of words, of phrases—suppressions, substitutions, additions, arbitrary compositions, and, what is worse, decompositions more arbitrary still", while another editor, Faugère, states that "there were not twenty consecutive lines that did not show some change. As for omissions, partial or whole, they were innumerable".

These alterations were due partly to actual misreading of Pascal's illegible scrawl, partly to a desire to tone down to "polite" French some of his brutally frank expressions or over-restlessly incisive phrases, partly also to the less forgivable desire to excise what did not fit in with the most orthodox Jansenism. It is thus only in our own day that we have obtained the really complete and authentic text of Pascal.

The *Thoughts* are as confused in their contents as in their form. They deal with every kind of subject, religious, philosophical, literary, social, and evidently represent Pascal's notes of many years, many of them anterior to the lecture of 1658. But if we turn to those *Thoughts* with the outline of the lecture of 1658 fresh in our minds, we shall soon discover that they contain, in some form or other, all the important points of the argument—some indeed in more than one form. It is therefore quite evident that we have here all Pascal's materials for the projected apology, and also a great deal more. Now a point on which Pascalian critics do not agree is the use Pascal intended to make of such notes as do not at first sight fit in with the outline of 1658. While some would bring into the *Apology* every fragment left by Pascal, others, among whom we would place ourselves, consider that the *Thoughts* contain much matter entirely extraneous to the proposed work. And we believe that many difficulties, caused by apparent contradictions in the *Thoughts*, would be solved if it were

more fully realised that many of those notes are but the hasty jotting down of opinions either which Pascal meant to refute, or which only represent a passing idea or mood.

There is a further problem, and this lies in the precise use which Pascal meant to make of those notes.

It may be said that there are two schools of Pascalians—those who believe that the plan of the *Apology* is capable of reconstruction, and those who have given up as hopeless any such attempt. The former do not indeed pretend that such a plan can be reconstructed without any margin of error, but they do believe that we have enough to go upon to put the fragments into a logical order which Pascal would not have disavowed. They base themselves on one of the two drafts which we possess given by his nephew and by Filleau. What Pascal's final plan would have been, no one, of course, can tell. He has told us himself¹ that "the last thing one finds in writing a book is the beginning"; but we must express our complete agreement with those who have endeavoured to sort into some kind of plan the notes that others have merely put together without any reference to the original purpose for which they were drafted. To such editions we much prefer the attempts which have been made to edit the *Thoughts*, not as scattered notes, but as an organic whole, and, in the exposition to which we shall soon come, we propose following closely the recent edition made by Professor Chevalier.²

Our one criticism of this edition is the editor's determination to bring into the work every extant fragment of Pascal's writings. We believe that it would be clearer and simpler to

¹ Thought 19. (The numbering used in references to *Thoughts* is that of the Brunschvicg editions, both in the *Grands Écrivains de la France* and in the Students' edition, published by Hachette. The same numbering is used in Mr. Trotter's translation of *Thoughts* from Brunschvicg's edition (see Appendix II.), so that English readers can find the original passage on reference thereto.)

² In two volumes (*Gabalda*, Paris, 1925).

omit, or at any rate to relegate to an appendix, many thoughts which, to our mind, can only be brought into the *Apology* by a very artificial dragging-in. There are, for instance, fragments which are evidently nothing but unused notes for the *Provincial Letters*. There is a good deal of material that must have been intended to appear in some mathematical or scientific treatises; there are some thoughts of which several drafts exist: many of these, we repeat, would be best out of the body of the work. From that point of view we would prefer to Prof. Chevalier's classification that given by Dr. Stewart in the *French Quarterly* for September 1920. But as Dr. Stewart's arrangement is only a scheme, and does not exist as an actual edition, we shall use M. Chevalier's book, which is definitely based, as is Dr. Stewart's outline, on Filleau's *Discourse*. Readers are therefore referred to that edition for a more detailed treatment of some points to which we can only allude.

The writing of an apology of Christianity appears to have been in Pascal's mind almost as soon as he began seriously to consider the problems of religion. It was, in a sense, inevitable that one who had given so much of his time to the expounding of scientific problems should now call the attention of his fellow-scientists to problems which were of far greater import. Further, the man, who had just been through such deep spiritual experiences after years of indifference, could not but try and shake out of their indifference the worldlings with whom he had been mixing. Finally, the Christian, who had just been compelled to dispute with other Christians on problems of faith, was anxious to shift the issue on to a plane where his fundamental unity with his fellow-believers would exclude theological polemics. We shall thus find in the *Apology* the threefold Pascal—the scientist, putting forward Christianity as a solution to the problem of human destiny—the man of the world, endeavouring to show the hollowness

of a non-Christian life—the Christian, putting forward his own experience, in order that others might be made to partake in the joy of deliverance from sin.

It must be remembered that while we are inevitably forced, for purpose of clearness, to divide Pascal's career into distinct sections, this separation is entirely artificial and has no real existence in Pascal's own life. Never, in particular, did he give up scientific work, and his approach to religious problems in the *Apology* is, right through, that of a scientist. Nor, on the other hand, did he ever break completely with his former friends of the world, and become the semi-hermit which his Port-Royal friends would like us to see in him. Pascal was never the man to work or think in water-tight compartments.

When exactly did Pascal conceive the idea of devoting himself to such a work? The evidence seems to be that what is termed the Miracle of the Holy Thorn was the determining factor. On the 24th of March 1656, his little niece, Marguerite Péricr, had been miraculously healed of a long-standing ulcer by being touched with a thorn from our Lord's crown of thorns, which relic was kept at Port-Royal. This miracle, followed by several similar ones, had several important consequences. To the friends and foes alike of Port-Royal, it appeared as the divine approval of Port-Royal. It encouraged Pascal and his friends in their attitude, and was one of the causes of the more extreme vigour shown in the later Provincial Letters. On the other side, it brought about a marked relaxation of persecuting measures, and made the situation easier for several years.

To Pascal himself, the cure came as a striking confirmation of the miraculous element in religion. It acted as an additional evidence of the supernatural character of Christianity. In one of his *Thoughts* he echoes a sentence of St. Augustine, "I should not be a Christian, were it not for the miracles".¹ The

¹ Thought 812.

whole matter has left the sphere of speculation; this miracle is a fact which has to be taken into account in the elaboration of any theories. Far from being a stumbling-block to faith, miracles become a confirmation. The insistence on miracle, which was to play a great part in Pascal's apologetics, has therefore a direct basis in the experience of his own life.

"He was thirty-four," his sister says, "when he set to work. He spent a whole year in preparation, as far as his other occupations would allow, gathering together all the thoughts that came to him on the subject; and at the end of that year—the thirty-fifth of his age and the fifth of his retirement from the world—he fell back into his former ill-health in so overwhelming a manner as to be unable to do any more work during the four years he was yet to live—if we can call 'living' the pitiful condition in which he spent them." If we accept this statement, it means that all the work for the *Apology* was done before the year 1658. But Etienne Périer states that "it was nevertheless during those four years of weakness and illness that he did and wrote all we have of him, of that work he was meditating, and all he gave to the public". In that case, the apologetic fragments of the *Thoughts* belong to the last five years of Pascal's life; and it is indeed unlikely that one in whom the mind mastered the body to such an extent should not, in spite of weakness and suffering, have added a great deal to the materials gathered by 1658; although it is probable that the finished portions are mainly anterior to his relapse into ill-health.

However long or short the time spent in preparation, it is certain that the *Apology* was to be the result of hard and steady work. Pascal did not trust himself to his earlier studies and general reading; he plunged into the study both of those writers whose views coincided in the main with his own—Jansenist theologians, earlier apologists—but also, and perhaps chiefly,

of those writers whose influence he had once felt and now deplored, and from which he wished to save his readers: Descartes, Montaigne, du Vair, Charron. There are also echoes of Catholic writers, such as St. Augustine, St. François de Sales, St. Teresa, the author of the *Imitatio*; but his main source was undoubtedly the Bible, upon which he was perpetually meditating and "knew by heart", his sister says. And if it is true that a great deal in the *Thoughts* is certainly borrowed, those borrowings only illustrate the way in which a writer of genius can so transform his borrowings as to make them his own.

CHAPTER II

The Contradictions of Human Nature

PASCAL tells us that his aim was to persuade men of the *truth* and of the *holiness* of revealed religion. This gives us at once a rough twofold division of the people for whom he was writing. Its truth had to be demonstrated to those who believed either that religion was false, or that it was a matter of indifference. He is therefore concerned both with the avowed unbeliever and with the indifferent man of the world. He is also anxious to convince of the truth of Christianity the Jews, whom he feels to be so near and yet so far, and of the truth of Catholicism professing Christians outside the Catholic Church. The holiness of revealed religion has then to be shown to those who see in Christianity something easy, making few claims, all profit at no cost. These have to be shaken out of their slack outward conformity, into a realisation of the demands Christianity makes on life and conduct. Thus the *Apology* would take up again, though from an entirely different angle, some of the problems raised in the *Provincial Letters*; without actually reviving the controversies with which these dealt, Pascal will once more thrust the awfulness of religion before those who would, in the phrase already quoted, "place soft cushions under the knees and elbows of kneeling sinners".

The precise method to be followed by a writer on Apologetics is bound to depend on his views as to what constitutes

the chief obstacles to belief in those he wishes to convince, and this in its turn must depend on his fundamental conception of religion and of men.

Pascal does not believe that unbelief is primarily due to intellectual causes. Unbelief, he says in effect, springs not from man's incapacity to believe what his reason tells him to be false, but from his disinclination to accept the view and way of life which belief would impose upon him. "The difficulty they have in believing comes from the difficulty they would have in obeying", says Filleau de la Chaise, echoing Pascal. It is because of the demands of Christianity that unbelief is prevalent, not because of genuine intellectual difficulties. The will to believe is not there. The efforts of the Christian apologist will therefore be directed mainly to the will; to challenging men out of the indifference in which they take refuge. When that is done, and when there is evidence of a *desire* to know the truth, it will be time enough to show there is nothing in truth which is irrational or unprovable. Essential as it is, that stage is the second, not the first.

That being so, it is evident that Pascal's whole approach will be radically different from that of the ordinary writer of so-called Christian evidences, who starts from entirely abstract considerations. Pascal's sole interest is man, the relation that exists between human nature, religion, and the world as a whole, in the impact that religion must have on human life and conduct. His one desire is to show the harmony existing between Christianity and man, how Christianity alone can make him intelligible unto himself, how in Christianity alone can he find any explanation of his thoughts, his aspirations, of everything, in fact, that makes him what he is.

The first part of his work will therefore be devoted entirely to a study of man in his ordinary, and so-called natural, conditions, with the intention of showing him that his true nature

is not really that which people are pleased to call natural, but consists in union with God, and in the doing of God's will; for only in such a condition can he find the happiness for which his soul craves, and which he seeks in so many unsatisfying ways. "Know thyself," says Pascal, "or rather know that thou wilt only know thyself in God."¹

Christianity will thus become not a series of dogmas, but a key, or rather, *the* key to the Universe—the one thing that makes life intelligible and possible. To become a Christian will involve not so much acceptance by the intellect only, or even mainly, of a certain set of beliefs, as a surrender of the whole personality to something—or better to some one—greater than the personality itself. It will be an individual relationship, not an abstract dogma, or, rather, the truth of the dogma will be proved by the reality of the experience which the surrender will involve.

It is therefore with man himself and man's nature that we must begin. Now what is the first thing which will strike any individual who sincerely faces the question "What am I?" Will he not be at once driven to admit that the whole difficulty is precisely: which of my numerous selves is really me? My best or my worst, or any of the intervening stages? My helplessness before the forces of nature, or my control of those same forces? Am I "a thing of naught that passeth away like a shadow", or some one "but a little lower than the Angels"? Man, in a word, is but a bundle of contradictions, and these Pascal proceeds to enumerate with a relentless realism.

Let man, he says, gaze at nature, at the whole creation

¹ It will be obviously impossible to refer the reader to every one of the *Thoughts* alluded to in the following analysis of Pascal's argument. The "key" passages are Thoughts 72 and 434 (the contradictions of human nature), 82 (the power of the imagination), 100 (pride), 139 (the craving for entertainment), 194 (human indifference), 294 (absence of natural justice), 347 (man as a thinking reed), 547, 553, 556 (Christ as the centre of all religion), 793 (the three orders in the universe).

in its complete majesty, and let him realise that the whole created universe which extends beyond his gaze is but a speck in the vast bosom of nature. It is beyond our imagination, beyond anything the mind can grasp, a sphere, having everywhere for its centre, and its circumference nowhere. Let man then look at himself in the midst of that nature, shut up in that little jail which he calls the universe, and let him therefore weigh up the true importance of the earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself. What is man before the infinite? But now reverse the situation, and look at an equally startling contrast of another kind. The tiniest insect has a whole physical system, and within that system are whole worlds. That miniature atom contains itself, as it were, an infinity of universes, in which again will be found infinitesimally small fragments: and when our imagination has become lost in such contemplation, let man return to himself once more and behold in himself a colossus—a world—in fact a whole in opposition to the nothing which our mind cannot grasp.

Whoever will thus look at himself between the two abysses of the infinitely great and the infinitely small will tremble at the sight of those marvels and realise what is man in nature: nothing as compared to the infinite—a whole as compared with nothing. Something halfway between everything and nothing—incapable of seeing either the void from which he has been taken or the infinite which engulfs him. All he can do is to realise that he can understand neither the origin nor the end of anything.

Our physical nature shows the same contradictions. We are afraid of extremes: we must have heat, but not too much; we cannot see if we are too near or too far; we cannot stand too much noise, yet absolute silence would drive us mad. There are limits of all kinds to what we can understand. Thus we really know nothing with certainty, nor are we content to

know nothing. We drift in uncertainty, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. As soon as we think we have reached some definite spot where we can find a resting-place, it starts quivering, and soon slips away from under our feet. Nothing ever remains stationary for us. That is our natural estate, and yet one which is furthest away from our taste. We burn with a desire to find firm ground under our feet—a fixed base on which we can erect a tower reaching to the skies—and the foundations crack, and the earth opens to the very foundations. And so we ask, why are we here? Why here rather than there? Why now rather than then? Why am I thus, and no different? And no answer comes, and we are terrified at the eternal silence of infinite space.

Even if we turn from the contemplation of the infinite to the more immediate problems of life, we soon find ourselves in the same difficulties. Our reason is perpetually baffled, crippled, by everything else in us. The senses by which we perceive the material universe deceive the mind: while, in their turn, the passions of the soul disturb the senses and give them false impressions. We can only see one aspect of the question at one time: the creaking of a weathercock is enough to prevent us from thinking. Do not be surprised if the sovereign judge of the world cannot reason very clearly just now. There is a fly buzzing about his ears. It is enough to make him incapable of coherent thinking. If you want him to discover truth, drive that animal which holds his reason in check, and disturbs that powerful mind that governs cities and kingdoms. That's a nice kind of God.

We are deceived then at every turn. The worst offender is our imagination, against which our reason is helpless. We are perpetually having to impress our imagination by external trappings—the gown of a judge—the armed guard of a king. We could not listen with gravity to the greatest preacher if

he was only partly shaved and his face half covered with soap. Imagination in fact controls everything. From her come beauty, justice, happiness. She seems to have been given to us on purpose to lead us into necessary errors.

Another disturbing element is illness. It spoils our judgement and our common sense. Our personal interest is also a marvellous instrument for blinding us. The fairest man in the world could not be a judge of his own case. We are all dominated by custom, by convention, by imitation. We can see nothing straight because of self-love. Its nature is to love and contemplate itself only, but that thing which it loves is full of faults and of wretchedness. It would like to be great, but it is small—to be happy and it is wretched—to be perfect and it is full of imperfections—to be loved and esteemed by men, and it is spurned and hated by them. The result of this is to make man hate the truth which shows him what he is. As he cannot destroy it, he covers up what it unveils, viz. his faults and those of others. And so we deceive ourselves and we deceive others, and there is no truth in us.

The other extraordinary thing is that this helpless, and self-deceiving, and self-deceived individual is full of pride. Whatever good we do, we want to display. From earliest childhood we want to be praised, and get slack if we are not. In fact, we are prepared to lose life with joy, provided it is talked about. The lowest of the low wants to have his admirers, and thus everything that is in us is contradictory. We are never prepared to live at the present time: we either look forward to the future or back to the past. We never really live: we are always hoping to live later on.

What we finally do, then, is to seek for a refuge from this life, and we seek for it in all kinds of things: in fact very often the slightest thing is able to divert our attention from very great troubles. Playing with a ball, hunting a hare can drive

away sorrow. Others go to science and philosophy, but they soon discover the hollowness of such things, and they turn back to ordinary entertainments to get through life. We must always have something to do: we can never do nothing. We must always be going out somewhere, surround ourselves with people to prevent us from thinking, try and get something we haven't got, run away from real life to see false life on the stage. We will think of everything except ourselves, and least of all, will we think of death. And yet we are all condemned to death with a respite, though we drive that thought away. We are in fact running towards an abyss, but we have put before our eyes something to prevent us from seeing it.

If we turn from the individual to society, we find the same wretchedness, the same contradictions. We talk of justice, but society is founded on injustice. What is right on one side of the frontier is wrong on the other; there is no crime that the law has not called right at some time or another: in fact law is constantly the caprice of a king, the rule of custom, the defence of the right of property, which is the right of usurpation. The world is ruled by might, by the desire for tyranny, by covetousness. There is no peace, no order, no justice.

And yet there is another side to all this. Wretched as we are, we are great. Only some one who is great can be conscious of his wretchedness: and we (alone of all created things) *are* conscious of our wretchedness. Man is therefore great, and alone in nature is great, since nature is conscious of nothing. Man is great because he can think. He is but a weak reed, which a breath of wind, a drop of water can destroy, but even when he is crushed and dies, he knows he is being crushed and is dying—and this the universe does not realise, and is therefore his inferior.

Further, the wretchedness which man experiences is the wretchedness which comes of a realisation of better things.

The wretchedness of man is the wretchedness of an impoverished lord, of a king in exile. Our desire for truth, our quest for happiness, are evidences that these exist, that we once knew them. Socially our thirst for justice shows that justice exists.

Thus our very wretchedness is an evidence of our greatness. Some philosophers have fastened on the one, and some on the other; some allow us to be the tools of our passions, others declare reason to be our mistress. Some let themselves become brutes, the others wish to be gods. But we are neither; we are neither brutes nor angels. We can now realise our true value, what we really are. We can love ourselves for the good that is in us, and scorn ourselves for the evil that is in us. We are capable of apprehending truth, and cannot find it. We can neither blame nor praise ourselves without reserve. The only thing we can do is to groan and seek.

Now the plainest common-sense tells us that this bundle of contradictions which we call man can be neither the perfect work of a creative will, nor the mere result of chance forces. We must assume, therefore, that we were created for something good which is evidenced by the good in us, but have allowed ourselves to become corrupted by evil forces, of which also we have evidence in us. Our obvious duty, if we have any self-respect, is to follow up this clue—to enter on that search. The one thing which is incomprehensible is to remain indifferent, and yet that is what we do.

The most amazing thing about man is precisely the utter indifference of the great mass of mankind to that one question that really matters—the problem of human destiny. Religion offers a solution of the problem, but religion is just about the last thing that men are interested in. They go out of their way to close their eyes and ears to religion. “I see myself placed in a world—I know not how or why—I don’t know what I am

or what my body is, or my soul, or the universe. All I know is that I am to die some day, and that, when I do, I either disappear into nothingness, or fall into the hands of an angry God; the conclusion I draw from this is that I must spend every day of my life without ever troubling to think of what is going to happen to me. I might find some light to lighten my darkness, but I don't want to take the trouble. I shall have nothing but contempt for those who do take that trouble, and shall drift without any foresight or any fear towards so great an event." That is how the ordinary man thinks. Mankind can be, in fact, divided into three categories—those who find God and serve Him—those who, not having found Him as yet, are seeking for Him—and those who have neither found nor yet seek. The first are sensible and happy—the second sensible and unhappy—the last are unhappy and mad.

CHAPTER III

Reconciliation and Reality¹

“WHAT a weird prodigy then is man, what a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a mass of contradictions, what a wonder, judge of all things, stupid earthworm, depository of truth, sewer of uncertainties and errors, the glory and the refuse of the universe. Who can disentangle such confusion? . . . Know thyself, then, proud being; and what a paradox thou art unto thyself. Humble thyself, helpless reason; be quiet, stupid nature; learn that man is beyond the understanding of man, and learn from your master your true condition, which you do not know. Listen to God.”

But how shall we seek God? Where shall He be found? All kinds of answers have been given to this question. Philosophy has tried and many of her answers are plausible enough, until we realise that to every one of these answers there is an opposite which is as true—or as false, since every philosophical principle both contradicts and is contradicted by some other system, some other principle. Besides, all philosophies are helpless before human passion; they leave us helpless and hopeless; they really explain nothing, and achieve nothing.

Religions? If philosophies fail, surely the various religions

¹ We have borrowed this expression from the title of the book written by the Rev. W. Fearon Halliday, M.A. (Christian Revolution Series, Swarthmore Press). We are indebted to Mr. Halliday for some valuable criticisms and suggestions embodied in the next two chapters.

of the world should help, since, after all, their essential function and purpose are to explain us to ourselves: and since they claim to be the direct revelations of our Creator. But when we enter the field of religious study, we again find the same difficulties. Religions explain nothing. Each asserts to have found the whole truth, but fails to shed any real light. Neither the religion of Confucius, nor that of Mohammed, nor any other gives any solution to the problem, or has any authority by which to be accepted. None of them really show God unto man.

There is one religion, however, which leaves in our minds a different impression, and that is the religion of the Jews. For we find them at the very start asserting about God and man facts which fit in strangely with our own experience. They declare that their fathers have told them that man is a fallen creature who has cut himself off from God, but that some day God would somehow redeem his people. Now here at last our feet are on something solid. Fallen from grace—that is exactly what we feel like when we look at ourselves. This religion at any rate starts rightly. It does give us a clue to our own nature, and to God's. But it does not go far enough. It holds out a hope, but it is only a hope. It speaks of the possibility of deliverance, but does not say that deliverance has come.

But in this half-hope, half-perplexity we come across people who take the step that the Jews do not take. They maintain that the redemption *has* taken place, that the Saviour *has* come. They use the Jewish religion as their starting-point, and declare that the promises made to the Jews have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus-Christ. Thus Judaism brings you straight on to Christianity. We find in these two religions, of which the one leads to the other, the essential solution to the problem of human nature—the explanation of why we are what we are—of

the way in which we can become what we wish to be—of the manner in which the contradictions of our being can be resolved into unity. We have, by our wrongdoing and rebellion, become estranged from the God of love and righteousness. The divine image, in the likeness of which he created us, has become effaced. But God will not let us perish in our sins, and by sacrificing himself in his incarnate Son He redeems us from the power and consequences of sin if we will but accept this redemption, allow him to work his purposes in and through us and become once more conformed unto His likeness.

Jesus-Christ is the centre of Pascal's theology because he is the solver of all the contradictions which we have, as it were, been piling up in this analysis. Man's greatness and man's wretchedness, "man's unworthiness of God, and his capacity for being made worthy of Him"—all this reconciliation and this harmonising could only be effected by "the union of two natures in the one person of a God-Man, Jesus Christ". One cannot know Him without knowing at the same time both God and one's own wretchedness. He is the Mediator needed by mankind, the Messiah expected by the Jews; he is "the object of everything, the centre to which everything tends, whoever knows Him knows the reason of all things. . . . He is the Redeemer of all, for He has offered himself, as a man who has redeemed all who will come to Him. If any die on the way, it is their misfortune; as to Christ, He offered them redemption. . . . If you say that Christ did not die for all, you give in to the evil tendency of men who apply at once this exception unto themselves, which is encouraging despair. . . . Christ is universal. . . . I love all men as my brethren because all have been redeemed. . . . In Him is all our virtue and our happiness; outside Him there is nothing but vice, misery, error, darkness, death and despair. . . . We love each other as members of His body; we love Him as being the body whose

members we are. It is through Him we prove God, we teach morals and doctrine. He is the real God of mankind."

There is probably no writer whose theology is more Christocentric than Pascal's.¹ Christ is the ultimate reality of religious experience, just as He is the centre of all beliefs. Christianity is in fact the acceptance of Christ. Everything else is but a consequence of this.

But by what miracle shall we be able to enter upon this communion with Him who no longer walks among men in the flesh? By the church, in which He is, as it were, re-incarnate. The miracles He once performed are repeated in the church; the authority He wielded is now in the hands of His Vicar on earth, the Pope; the sacraments of the Church are the channels of His grace, the teaching of the Church is the continuation of His teaching, and the Church is the supreme interpreter of His message and revelation; only in the Church are true saints produced.

Only in the Church do you find reconciled the apparently contradictory truths that make up faith. All heresies spring from failure to conceive of the agreement of two truths opposed, and from believing these to be incompatible, and thus rejecting some of them. Thus exclusion is the source of all heresy. The existence of the Church to-day is, in fact, the supreme proof of the existence and divinity of Christ.

Having led up to Christ by the road of human need and shown in Him the deliverer from the contradictions of self, the revealer of God, the solution to the problem of human

¹ We confess our amazement at finding a discerning critic like Brémond declare that "Pascal's Christology is timid, short, skimpy. . . . His Christ has been unable to redeem the world. . . . Hardly anything has changed in the world as a result of his coming"; and in another passage, that "however profoundly Christian is his religion, it tends to be little more than a Christianity which is colourless, impoverished, diminished, almost reduced to the single dogma of original sin, which has become a kind of obsession" (Brémond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux*, iv. pp. 382 and 402).

existence, Pascal is now free to turn to proofs from history: prophecies, miracles, etc. It must be confessed that Pascal's system of proof cannot carry to the modern mind the conviction which it did to his. Truth itself may be eternal, and we are the last to hold with any theory that truth really changes from generation to generation; but it cannot be denied that there do seem to be great changes in the type of argument that satisfies the minds of various people in various times and places; and there are few among us who would feel any real cogency in Pascal's method of piling up miracles, prophecies, symbols, as fundamental evidence. His method of using the Old Testament, in particular, would be only valid by granting the soundness of certain assumptions most of us would be unable to make, and it is no disrespect to Pascal's genius to say that if the *Apology* really rested on its historical and dialectical proofs, its influence would have been but short-lived. But even here we must not exaggerate; the tendency has been to overstress the old-fashionedness of Pascal's reliance on historical proofs, forgetting that it was a revolution in thought to declare that it was really the fact of Christ being the Son of God which established the truth of prophecies and not the reverse.

When we have shown, however, that Christ is the supreme Revelation of God, and Christianity the only religion which solves the problem of human existence, we have not thereby removed all obstacles to belief. There is something in man which refuses to go any further. If things are indeed as we have said, what are the consequences? If God be indeed the God of the Jews and of Jesus Christ, a God of holiness and love, what next? It means that His holiness must abhor the evil in us, and wish to destroy it. His love means that we must love Him in return, and this love can only be expressed by conformity with His will.

Now this means the transformation of our human nature. It means surrender; it means sanctification; and the process does not at first sight appear a pleasant one, so man rebels. He does not *want* Christianity to be true, he does not *want* to sacrifice anything, to die to himself. And he puts up doubt and scepticism as a barrier against truth. He demands proofs, which one part of his self is resolved never to accept. There is therefore a twofold work to be done: to present proofs which the most stubborn mind will have to accept, and particularly to bend the will so as to make man willing to receive the light.

How shall we bring ourselves to accept what is not, as yet, clearly proved to our reason? First by the removal of the obstacles. Having shown the incoherence of all other systems, and the coherence and reasonableness of Christianity, we must insist on the fact that the question at issue is not one about which one can remain in ignorance or indifference. Man must say "yes" or "no" to the challenge that God is, or God is not. Indifference is equivalent to denial. You cannot escape the dilemma—you must stake your life on the existence or non-existence of God.

We come here to a curious passage in which Pascal urges his hearers to wager that God is, even if they do not really believe it. "Act as if God existed," he says; "to put it mildly, it is safer. Suppose that God is not, you will not have lost anything worth while; but to wager that God is not, is, supposing He does exist, nothing but criminal folly. The risk is too great. Wager therefore that God is, and you will ultimately find, by sheer experience, that He really does exist."¹

¹ Opinions have always been divided as to the attitude to be adopted towards the argument of the wager. Is it meant to be taken really seriously, or is it only a jest, the amusement of a mathematician? We believe, with Professor Chevalier, that Pascal, half in fun, half in earnest, is trying to meet fellow mathematicians on their own ground, and to persuade them

All this, however, will but take you to the threshold of religion. The objections of reason must be met, the resistance of the will must be broken down; but the real object of religion is to put man in contact with God. This is not done through the intellect, but through the heart. Now the heart is the centre of the emotions; and ultimately religion, which is faith in and love towards God, is a matter of the heart. Pascal, in fact, would not be far from accepting the idea that becoming a Christian is more analogous to falling in love than to any purely intellectual process.

It is clear that we are now at the very centre of the whole problem of belief. It is no longer a question of proofs, of the amount of truth to be found in this or that system; it is the facing of the fundamental question as to what constitutes religion.

We are often told that Christianity is not so much a religion as a life, or that religion is life. There are probably few writers who have grasped more fully than Pascal the implications of such a standpoint. Christianity to him is not *a* life, but *life*: the only thing which endures, which gives meaning to what otherwise would be but existence, the one explanation of the way in which the world was made, the one key to the human mind and to human nature; and he would doubtless have endorsed the definition we once heard of Christianity as "the way the world was meant to run", with the natural corollary that it can never be run in any other way, and that there can be no satisfactory working of human institutions along any other methods.

Now, being life, Christianity will be apprehended by that

that the logical result of their own strictly scientific, rationalistic method is to lead them to religion. Such an argument would not touch the heart; but it might lead to an attitude of mind that would make faith possible (see Thought 233).

part of the individual in which resides the fundamental essence of personality. If you want to make a man into a Christian, you must get past those parts of him which are, as it were, the outside defences of the person: past the body (for which Pascal has the contempt of the ascete), past the reason (for which he has the wholesome respect of the man of science and the philosopher, but whose limitations none knows better than he), down to that source of individuality which he calls the heart, the centre of affections, of feeling, of will, of all that distinguishes man from the mere animal or from the thinking-machine.

It is in that fortress, in which lies the centre of individuality, that all fundamental decisions are taken. It is therefore against that fortress that the whole attack has to be carried. There must be the will to believe, the readiness to make life in harmony with the ultimate realities revealed in God. Now this has little, if anything, to do with an intellectual apprehension of Christianity. You may be persuaded of the abstract proof of Christian dogmas, and yet be as far as ever from a living faith. What has to be done is to transfer this struggle from the persuaded mind to the unyielding heart—unyielding because it does not want to yield, because “the truth of the existence of God has formidable consequences in the moral order. . . . It is hard to recognise God, because God, once recognised, demands obedience, self-control, self-sacrifice, self-surrender.”¹ For the acceptance of Christianity is a battle, in which there must be a victor and a vanquished, a victory and an unconditional surrender. Either the individuality will become God’s, or it will remain dominated by the unregenerate self; in either case it will be a slave.

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free,

for in His service only is perfect freedom.

¹ Chevalier, *Pascal*, p. 295.

The same problem can be reversed. The intellect may be unpersuaded, because it is under the control of those forces of deceit which we analysed at an earlier stage: self-interest, pride, vain glory, fear of consequences in every department of life. Make the individual ready, willing to accept the consequences of truth, whatever these may be, and intellect, no longer vitiated by the corruption of sin, will recognise truth. It is that which Pascal sums up when he says that "truth is known, not only by reason, but chiefly by the heart. It is by this last method that first principles are apprehended."

It is thus by the opening of the innermost self to the inrush of a spirit from without that religion really works and is proved. The truth of Christianity is going to be found in the work of Christ in the human soul. We saw a little earlier how Pascal advised the unbeliever to act as if Christianity were true, saying that if he made the experiment, the truth of Christianity would soon appear. Why would it appear? Because Christianity being life as it is meant to be lived, any attempt to live Christianity will inevitably restore the harmony previously broken between the individual existence and the ultimate reality of the universe. Conformity between the individual self and the will of God will cause the disappearance of those conflicts which we have analysed and resolve those inner contradictions. That is salvation. Christianity is a life, beginning with a deliverance, and continuing in a constant communion with a person, Jesus Christ.

Having thus summarised the psychology of conversion, we can pass on to the philosophical basis which Pascal gives to this process in his theory of the three orders. There are, as it were, three spheres of human existence, distinct and yet one—the body, the mind, and the soul. You cannot compare them with each other, much less confuse them, for they are distinct. And he produces here a mathematical analogy. We know that a

point being without dimension, no amount of points will make a straight line. A line and a point belong to different orders. Similarly no number of lines can make up a plane surface, no number of plane surfaces a solid, for they all belong to different orders. Now in the same way nothing which the body produces is equal to the slightest activity of the mind: the least thought belongs to a different and higher order than the greatest amount of physical disturbance, even if this be a cataclysm of the whole universe. In the same way the slightest movement of the heart, the slightest spark of affection, belong to a different and higher order than the highest and most marvellous combinations produced by the intellect. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

The supreme category of all values is thus the order of "charity"; it is to that order that religion belongs, and we might summarise Pascalian apologetics in saying that his object is to show Christ as the revelation and incarnation of that highest order, as the channel by which man will himself enter into it. "He may have been lowly in worldly estate, but in his own order He is great by his life, passion, betrayal, resurrection." Now just as the order of matter is apprehended by the body, and the order of mind by the reason, so the heart is man's instrument for entering upon the order of charity, of holiness. The essence of this order, that which distinguishes it from the orders of body and mind, is that it is supernatural, and that for man to enter into it means a new birth. The condition of that new birth is death to the old life and nature; that death and new birth are within the reach of all, however humble and ignorant, for it is outside and above reason and learning: "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven". Of all this Christ is the revealer,

He is the Door, He is the Key, the Truth, and the Life. "I therefore open my arms to my Liberator, who, having been foretold for 4000 years, has come to suffer and die for me on the earth at the time and under the circumstances which had been foretold. By His grace I await Death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united with Him; and I live nevertheless in joy, either in the good He is pleased to give me, or in the evils He sends me for my good, and which He has taught me to endure by His example."¹

¹ Thought 737.

CHAPTER IV

The Value of the *Apology*

“IF Pascal has failed in his demonstrations,” writes a modern critic, “it means that Christianity is dead.”¹

Half a century ago, such a statement would have been received with incredulous amazement by both friends and foes of Christianity. There were doubtless many magnificent passages in the *Thoughts*, but as a work of apologetics they were “out of date”, according to Ste. Beuve; “of no effect”, in the eyes of Scherer; “blows that no longer carried”, in the opinion of Rambert;² while champions of Christianity, without questioning so categorically the value of Pascal’s apologetic, were very half-hearted in their defence, and admitted his system of proofs to be somewhat archaic. No one had as yet realised that the study of psychology was going to make of Pascal a pioneer, and of his work one of the great statements of Christian evidences.

Two questions have to be asked—Is the psychological approach to religion sound in itself? Then, granting that it is, is Pascal’s psychology sound?

The first question need not detain us. If Pascal be wrong in his method, most of our contemporary apologetic is wrong. Paley’s *Evidences*, the *Proofs of the Existence of God* derived

¹ Reymond, *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, July 1923.

² Giraud, *Pascal*, p. 176.

from analogy or design, all these systems that Pascal discarded leave us cold. We are troubled by the problem not so much of the existence as of the nature of God; we want to know if He is really like Christ; we look to religion for the meeting of our deepest needs, both individual and social. Certainly, for the man in the street of to-day, the failure of Pascal's methods would seriously cripple Christian apologetics—which, of course, is not the same as saying that Christianity would be dead.

But granted the soundness of the method, what about the actual work? for it is by its inherent soundness that the apologetic must stand or fall. Is Pascal's analysis of human nature exact? Is it true that what we are pleased to call the cold, unfettered reason is, as a matter of fact, largely the sport of our imagination and of our hidden, often unconscious, desires? that our ideas are in fact largely the result of our inner attitude towards life? and that this attitude, these inner desires, are controlled by the real self, whose surrender to this or that moral reality constitutes true religion? "The key to Pascal's *Thoughts*", writes Vinet, "is that religious certainty is a fact belonging to the moral order."¹ Is Pascal right?

To say "yes" is not to be blind to some of the weak sides of his apologetic. We have already pointed out the inadequacy, in our eyes, of his appeal to proofs from miracles, prophecies, isolated texts. His exegesis can no longer satisfy us. A sincere critic must admit that Pascal apparently knew little history and nothing of comparative religion. (We say "apparently" because the "Thoughts" are, after all, but fragments: we might pass a different judgement on the completed work.)

It has also been urged (and this is no small criticism) that he has minimised the intellectual difficulties of truly sincere seekers after truth, and in particular the problems that modern scientific research has created, and of which, scientist though

¹ *Lectures on Pascal*, p. 134.

he was, he could have no idea. To this Pascal would have answered that his possible ignoring of certain difficulties did not vitiate an argument that proceeded from radically different principles, against which scientific discoveries were helpless and irrelevant. His apologetic is founded on a certain conception of human nature, of the relation existing between the various parts of human personality, of what in the last resort really constitutes the essence of personality. It depends ultimately on his view of the relation of the "heart" to reason.

Pascal's problem, be it remembered, was to rebuild Christian apologetics against a double attack: the scepticism of Montaigne, who virtually denied to human reason the power of knowing anything, and the rationalism of Descartes, who, in spite of his "polite bow" to religion "regarded reason as the common centre of knowledge, life, science, morality, and religion",¹ thus in effect denying the existence of any but strictly rational truth.

Pascal has been described² as "perpetually oscillating between those two extremes". He knows too well the power of reason to ignore Descartes, too well its limitations not to see the elements of truth in Montaigne; but the main enemy, to his mind, is Descartes. Montaigne may produce despair, but despair may bring man, in his very helplessness, to the foot of the Cross, while belief in unaided reason produces pride, and pride is the most deadly obstacle to religion, since religion means obedience and surrender.

His aim was therefore to build up some system which should give reason its proper place in the acquisition of truth. He was quite sure that somewhere the synthesis must be found between those two contradictions, the helplessness of reason and the power of reason; or, as he put it, "to avoid the two excesses

¹ Boutroux, *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv. p. 792.

² By Reymond, *op. cit.*

of excluding reason and of admitting nothing but reason"; he was convinced that man was neither required to believe blindfold, nor able to find a purely rational explanation of every phenomenon. This synthesis must be in man himself: the study of man must provide the answer to the problem; it is futile to build up theories; study man himself, find out how, as a matter of fact, he does arrive at certainty in the various spheres of human knowledge—and light will come.

Now if man be a divine creation, reason is evidently a divine gift. It has its function, and within its sphere must be a trustworthy instrument. Pascal's scientific research, his philosophical studies, have assured him that there is such a thing as rational certainty within certain spheres—in mathematics, for instance, it is certain that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. Reason can here function freely and accurately because you are dealing with objective facts in the solution of which man has no personal interest. The limitations of reason appear as soon as you apply it to problems which do touch personal interests. We can always find arguments for or against what we want to believe or disbelieve, and in metaphysics and philosophy it becomes possible equally to prove and disprove absolutely contradictory propositions.

Your reason is therefore not an objective rigid instrument: it is flexible and subjective; you are trying to measure things not with a fixed measure, but with a piece of elastic. What really matters is that you *want* to prove. This is determined by your intuitive acceptance or rejection of moral truth and by your unconscious motivation. To put it in another way, reason can make logically certain deductions from first principles which are unprovable and therefore non-rational in origin.—Not, be it noted, irrational; reason can easily disprove certain assump-

tions, *e.g.* that the earth is square or flat; but it is helpless to prove such first principles as do not involve irrational assumptions.

Those first principles are then apprehended by some other faculty than reason. "First principles cannot be proved, but we know them through the heart and the instinct, and it is in this kind of knowledge that reason must lean, and then deduce the consequences from those principles." What Pascal calls the "heart", modern philosophy would call intuition. But—and this is the essential point—modern philosophy upholds him in the fundamental principles of his system, that is, in the limitations to be placed to the sphere of pure reason, because of the way in which reason is liable to be but the sport of inner desire, of imagination; in the placing of the religious life in that centre of the person which is neither the mind nor the body, and which really controls both; and in his insistence on presenting religion as primarily answering the needs and aspirations of that inner self, and being therefore independent of (though not contrary to) rational proof. "It is as ridiculous and useless for reason to ask the heart for proof of first principles before it can accept them as for the heart to ask reason for the perception of those deductions it proves before it can accept them. . . . The heart has its reasons that reason knows not."

Pascal's theory of the three orders is thus the centre of his system, and a philosophical conception of the highest value in our own day. As Dr. Stewart remarks,¹ "not only in the high regions to which these words of Pascal lift us, but in our everyday dealings we are constantly confusing the orders. Our failure to distinguish them is responsible for half the wrong imputation of motive, and for more than half the envy and disappointed personal ambitions with which we vex ourselves and others." The world has not yet learnt that the

¹ *Holiness of Pascal*, p. 86.

use of the methods and principles of one order will only achieve results in that order; that physical force will only achieve material results, but will not change men's hearts; that spiritual ends will only be accomplished by spiritual methods—

To man propose this test—

Thy body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

And yet, one should perhaps remember Pascal's fundamental principle about truth coming from the harmonising of two apparent opposites. The distinction between the three orders is true and essential enough, but Pascal forgets perhaps the other truth, that those three orders are not as impenetrable as he thinks; that the three parts of man and of man's activities are at times curiously dependent on each other; and that a well-regulated life will know how to give adequate room to all three functions, by harmonising them. There are times, as Browning reminds us in the poem just quoted, when

Not soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul.

What is true of the relation of body to soul is no less true of the relation of mind to soul. However helpless the abstract intellect may be at apprehending ultimate reality, it is equally certain that love without intellect is meaningless. Real love, as opposed to mere feeling, implies the recognition of value in the loved object, and such valuation is intellectual. Real love cannot ignore or violate truth; and any recognition of truth is an intellectual process. Reason has indeed its sphere and its laws, but it cannot be isolated from love, which has therefore an intellectual as well as a physical element.

In the same way, reason has its emotional element, for we would never trouble to use our reason were it not for some interest in life—an interest which belongs to the order of the heart. Nor again can intuition be entirely separated from previous sub-conscious observation, so that our moral intuitions

are the union of intellect and feeling in our relations with persons. In a word, personality is the ultimate source of all values, and in the last resort personality cannot be divided: the three orders have indeed to be distinguished, but cannot be entirely abstracted from personal life.

It would seem that Pascal had some apprehension of this, without having realised it clearly. In any case these criticisms do not touch the root of the matter. Pascal really "sketched in outline a new system. He endeavoured to substitute a philosophy of feeling and of will for a philosophy based on pure intelligence";¹ he is, in other terms, a precursor of systems based on intuition and the unconscious, and his apologetic largely stands or falls by the truth of those systems.

But, it has been said, is not this placing of religion in intuition really denying the existence of objective truth? Is Pascal really certain of anything? Is he not at bottom a sceptic?

"Pascal", says Taine, "is never really sure of his ground; he is perpetually going over his arguments and one feels that there remains in his soul a drop of scepticism that poisons him and corrupts the force of all the proofs he has put forward", while to another writer "the Redeemer's Cross sways like a reed in the wind".²

But what is scepticism? "Scepticism", says Vinet, one of the most far-sighted of Pascal's commentators, "is to the mind what irresoluteness is to the temperament—it is a kind of incapacity of coming to a definite conclusion, a liking for an indefinite postponement which perpetually examines contradictory arguments without ever really trying to weigh them up; in a word, a weakness, an idleness of the intellect." "There was no clinch in his mind," says Goldwin Smith of

¹ Giraud, *Pascal*, p. 194.

² Quoted by Giraud, *Pascal*, p. 204.

Jowett of Balliol; "he would have doubted, and kept other people doubting for ever". Can the same be said of Pascal?

Surely not. The true sceptic is one who does not really admit that there be any axiomatic first principles on which any system of thought or morals can be built. But such an initial negation is not to be found in Pascal. He nowhere denies the possibility of knowledge; what he does challenge is the claim of reason to be the sole source of knowledge. In fact, he believes in an inner certainty against which rational considerations are helpless. "We know truth through our hearts and it is in vain that reason, who has no share in this, tries to struggle."

But, it will be asked, is this intuitive certainty really different from a subjectivism so complete as to be really indistinguishable from scepticism as to the possibility of truth being communicable?

The answer lies in Pascal's conception of what is religion. Christianity is a life: its truth can only be proved by experimentation, but trial proves it at once. You may argue till doomsday about the truths of Christianity and be no nearer certainty; try and live as if Christianity were true and your whole being will soon be convinced, including your reason. To be sure that water will bear you up, you must throw yourself into it: you cannot prove or disprove it as long as you just stand on the brink.

There is, in fact, nothing less subjective than Pascal's view of religion. Christianity is the world as it was made, or it is nothing; the Christian is he who endeavours to fit himself into the world as God made it, to harmonise himself with God's purposes. There must be of course an initial desire to accept those purposes; and there is in some men a sort of moral scepticism which makes it difficult indeed to see

in Christianity any beauty that we might desire; but such moral scepticism was never at any time that of Pascal. Principles are felt, propositions are deduced, and the whole is a certainty he declares; but that certainty will ultimately only come from experience, however much reason may be implicitly involved, and that kind of certainty is the only one that can be communicated. Vinet, in one of his sermons,¹ thus summarises the Pascalian standpoint: "If you ask a Christian for the grounds of his belief he will be unable indeed to explain the unexplainable. But if he says to you: 'I love God in all my brethren with a true affection; I am happy to live, and I shall be happy to die; everything in me is now harmonised, strength, activities, aim and desires, affections and thoughts.' If he says these things and his actual life bears them out, then do not waste your time in trying to argue with him; *he has truth because he has life*. . . . He has a certainty that no arguments could shake or increase; he has in himself the proofs of truths that cannot be shaken; he is in fact a living proof."

To some of Pascal's critics there is, however, no real difference between this insistence on experience and a subjectivism which is almost akin to scepticism. "We cannot admit", says Mr. Brémond, "that a personal experience, however comforting or attractive we may think it to be, can be a certain sign of confirmation in grace and of predestination. An illusion is always to be feared. . . . Putting aside mystical phenomena, which belong to an entirely different order, it does not appear that the Christian can know by experience either the state of grace or the state of non-grace. He may be conscious of a certain inner fervour, but not of grace itself; for this fervour need not come from grace, and might have an entirely natural origin. . . . This insistence on experience, on justifying faith and on

¹ Nazelle, *Vinet, critique de Pascal*, p. 203.

conscious regeneration, is a Lutheran and Calvinistic idea . . . from which Pascal is not entirely free.”¹

It may not be unwholesome to be thus sharply reminded that all Christians do not accept readily the ultimate validity of religious experience. Such a warning is not superfluous in an era which has tended to relegate in this experience all religious authority, and tends to identify truth with every vagary of so-called mystical feeling. It would, however, be quite inexact to place Pascal in the category of those who believe that truth is what we make it, and would deny the reality of objective truth, the transcendent existence of God and the possibility of a true certainty which feelings cannot shake. He believes on the contrary that the threefold proofs of the divinity of Christ (that His coming was foretold—that He actually came, lived, died, and rose again—and that He lives for ever) as found in the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Church—are all “solid and palpable proofs, . . . undoubted foundations, which cannot be questioned by any one; but in themselves they are not finally convincing without the inward urge of divine grace”. Interpreted by unregenerate man, in his “concupiscence”, those proofs can be disproved and lead man away from religion—the study of Holy Scripture is only for those with a pure heart. “It is only the pure heart that will seize upon the meaning of prophecies and miracles, and that will finally build up the synthesis of those various proofs, seeing how they mean little if taken separately, but are full of force when seen to converge into a mass of independent witnesses!”² This concordance, as Bergson says, gives a certainty which is neither that of mathematics or of physics, but is as great as any certainty you ever obtain in history or

¹ “Not to feel, or to be utterly abandoned—it was all one to him. If he had the same feelings about God as before, he felt able to undertake anything” (Brémond, iv. p. 352).

² Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, quoted by Chevalier, *Pascal*, p. 318.

law. The heart grasps the linking together of all those convergent proofs and then gets the certainty of convergence. It does not in any sense create those proofs, much less create the truth these proofs stand to demonstrate.

Thus the heart is not the seat and source of religious authority; all that it can do is to recognise that authority in the Church. It has, however, to make that act of recognition, that surrender. This is an individual matter.¹ But surely this individual acceptance is not the same thing as the rejection of authority save that of experience. What Pascal would have said was that no certainty was possible without experience, but that no experience was dependable which conflicted with the common experience of Catholic Christianity. To be valid, the experience must be ultimately a confirmation of the authority of the Church. There are not two Christian religions but one only; if your experience does not fall into line with that of Catholic Christians, then it is defective.

It is, however, difficult not to admit that, anxious as he is to preserve the authority of the Church, and thereby the principle of external authority, Pascal's system does tend to ruin this authority and to admit in the last resort the authority of the individual conscience. This is not to force upon him an unconscious Protestantism he would have ardently disavowed; and it is not irrelevant to remind ourselves, with M. Giraud, that the *Thoughts* have never been placed on the Index and are, therefore, not held to contain any non-Catholic doctrine.² But the fact remains that Pascal's certainty comes from a direct experience, and that he only accepts authority because it is confirmed by that experience.

¹ And yet, he also said that "far from accepting something by hearsay you must believe nothing without first getting into the attitude of never having heard it before. It is the consent of yourself to yourself and the constant voice of your reason, not that of others, that must make you believe" (*Thought* 561).

² Giraud, *Pascal*, p. 154.

Pascal's *Apology* is then an apology for Catholic Christianity, but should we not rather call it an apology for Jansenism?

This is not the place for discussing the problem of the relation of Pascalian thought to Jansenism, as this can only be considered when later events in Pascal's career have been studied.

"Pascal", says Strowski, "was simultaneously the most and the least Jansenistic of Christians." The answer to the apparent riddle lies in the exact meaning to be attached to the term "Jansenist". What do we mean by Jansenism? The Puritan party within the French Catholic Church? The opposition to the Society of Jesus? The adherents of Jansen's theology? Port-Royal itself? Nothing but confusion results if those elements be not carefully separated. For the present, we only ask the question: how far is the theology of the *Thoughts* that of St. Cyran and Jansen?

It is harder here to be strictly objective; it is always easy to read into the scattered fragments of a man's thoughts what we would like them to contain. A great deal of the problem lies really in the differences of the point of view as to the significance and to the extent of what in Pascal is common to Jansenism and to Catholicism, in fact to their common Christianity. Some writers call Jansenistic many statements which others would merely call Christian: while others are undoubtedly at pains to dismiss as unimportant whatever they find which is not strictly in accordance with the most rigidly orthodox Catholic dogma.

There is, we believe, a fundamental incompatibility, not always conscious but always present, between the essentials of Jansenist theology and those of Pascalian thought. On what does Jansenism ultimately rest? On a view of God and man which, argue as we may, amounts to a predestinationism practically indistinguishable from that of Calvin. It reduced

man to the status of an utterly irresponsible and helpless instrument in the hands of God; it left no room for free-will, none for the Sacraments, and was in essence a most rigidly individualistic view of Christianity. That, at least, is the view the Church took of it; and, although one might be tempted to tone down the rigidity of some of the statements, it remains true in fundamentals.

Pascalian apology rests, on the contrary, on the initiative of the individual will. To believe that, in the last resort, when every influence has been brought to bear, the individual remains free to say 'yes' or 'no' to the call of divine grace is not Jansenism. Nor is Pascal an orthodox Jansenist on the matter of predestination. Not indeed that he has entirely shaken off the predestinationist theories under which he has first learnt Christianity. He cannot free himself entirely from the conception of God having called some and not others, of God concealing Himself lest He be found. "Vere, tu es Deus absconditus." "We can understand nothing of the works of God if we do not start from the principle that He has willed to blind some and enlighten others."

But another side of Pascal is struggling against this limitation of divine grace, against this despairing theory of the small number of the elect. The Cross of Christ loses much of its meaning if it be not for all men who will claim it, and, as we saw, many *Thoughts* insist on this potential universality of salvation, breaking away again from Jansenist theology.

The starting-point of this divergence is in reality a different conception of human nature. For the Jansenist, human nature is absolutely corrupt. Man is born in sin and shapen in iniquity, utterly incapable of any naturally good action or motion, powerless to afford to the work of divine grace any starting-point, as it were, in the free attitude of the individual will.

But Pascal insists on the dual nature of man, insists on the fact that man could not be conscious of the evil in him were it not for the good which is in him, and that salvation lies ultimately in the individual will, which is the essence of the personality, crushing the evil self in order to leave God free to work in the good self.

Nor is the yielding of that heart to God the passive acquiescence of a helpless instrument to the all-powerful, irresistible hand of God. Nothing is more active and alive than this surrender, this obedience. To obey is to do; it is by educative actions that the sin-corrupted will regains its power. Pascal has too great a respect for human individuality to forget what may almost be termed the respect of the Creator for his creature.

Pascal believes indeed in original sin—no one ever thought himself more of a miserable sinner—but “he transfers as it were original sin from an abstract cold past to a living present, from the original Adam to the conscience of the Christian of to-day”.¹ His personal experience transcends the rigid limits of Jansenist dogma; the love of God, His redeeming power, loom larger. As Brémond says,² the “appeal to the heart is meaningless if sin has completely corrupted that heart”.

If the keynote of Pascal's theology be not Jansenistic, neither is his method. We have often in these pages used the term “conversion” of various stages in Pascal's experience; and converted Pascal indeed was, in the full sense in which this term is used, turned to God and away from self. But these successive advances on the road to holiness do not imply so much a repudiation of the past as a progressive synthesis, in which every emotion, every activity of mind and soul are gradually brought in, harmonised in spite of their apparent

¹ Blondel, in *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, June 1923.

² Brémond, iv. p. 411.

contradictions. Towards this synthesis Pascal struggled, in agony of body and spirit; and the struggle ultimately killed him. Now it is not in Jansen that Pascal found the inspiration of that synthesis. The Louvain theologian was mesmerised by one aspect of truth; he neglected its antithesis. He dissected the quest for truth into a series of mutually exclusive affirmations, forgetting that "when two truths seem to contradict each other, there is a third truth, hidden in the bosom of God, which reconciles them".¹ This forging of truth out of apparent opposites, which is Pascal's key to the universe, would suffice to separate him from the Jansenist school.

But, it is said, parallels to nearly all Pascal's assertions can be found in Jansenist writings; besides, his handling of Scripture, his insistence on a certain type of proof, all these are essentially Jansenistic. But to urge this is precisely to fall into the trap already noticed, of claiming exclusively for Jansenism all it has in common with Christianity. Those who wish to see at all costs in Pascal the great exponent of Jansenism can only do so, it seems to us, by exaggerating the difference which exists between Jansenism and Catholicism, to the extent of ultimately making the Jansenist virtually the sole upholder of real Christian belief, and trying somehow or other to ascribe to him everything which is really Christian in the seventeenth century—a standpoint which the most fanatical of Jansenists would scarcely dare adopt.

This is not to say that Pascal's turn of mind and expression do not bear the impress of his early Jansenist upbringing—the reverse would surprise us. A man cannot shake off the phraseology of the church of his youth, even if he have deliberately left that church; all the more so must we expect to find Jansenist phraseology in Pascal, who never formally repudiated the sect through which he had been brought to a living faith.

¹ Gaston Frommel.

But if we look to his essential experience and outlook, we find a soul freeing itself from the predestinationist theology of Jansen, just as he had previously shaken off the determinist philosophy of Descartes.

If we now endeavour to summarise the main lines of Pascalian apologetics, we should come to the following conclusions.

Firstly, try as you will, you will have to make somewhere an unprovable assumption. Pure rationalism does not exist; belief in the power of reason rests on the assumption of the validity of that reason, which is the very point at issue. You must take something for granted. Even in mathematics, that most exact of sciences, there are axioms. The difference between the so-called rationalist and the Christian lies in their making different assumptions, not in the former making none. Having made your assumption, you may be as much of a rationalist as you like—in fact you must be.

The validity of Christianity lies in the fact that its assumptions are truly in harmony with all the ascertainable facts concerning the world in general and man in particular; and in the further fact that those who have staked their lives on the truth of those assumptions are prepared to testify that they do correspond to reality.

Secondly, Pascal shows that religion, if it be anything at all, is the thing in the world that matters most; that men must either deliberately deny the truth of Christianity or be prepared to be judged by it, but that religion cannot be patronised, or watered down, or ignored.

It has been observed, with truth, that this onslaught on the folly of indifference is perhaps the strongest part of Pascal's *Apology*—that he is more likely to stir up professing Christians to a deeper religious life than to convince avowed atheists, and

that to get the best of Pascal you must have previously made the same fundamental assumptions as his. Perhaps. Let us not forget, at any rate, that his aim is not to present us with an original system of philosophy, but to force us to say 'yea' or 'nay' to the challenge of Christianity. "Pascal", says Maritain,¹ "has fallen into the clutches of philosophers. That great mind has been torn away from his true abode, the art of converting souls, which belongs to the order of revealed faith, and has been transplanted into the country of philosophical speculation, which belongs to the order of purely natural knowledge."

Thirdly, by his theory of the three orders, he has freed religion from the dead hand of cold intellectualism, and given personal experience a philosophical basis, without any banishing of the rational element in religion. At the same time, he has imperishably demonstrated that religion, if it be valid at all, must be moral and ethical; that no mystical contemplation of God can be genuine if it has no purifying effect in the moral life of the individual. It has been stated by a French critic that Pascal has more of a naturally religious than of a naturally moral nature, and that he has little if any instinct for moral duty for its own sake: sin is sin because it is contrary to God's will, but there is no instinctive recoil from evil, no driving force of a categorical imperative.² The point is, we believe, that the grosser sins tempted so little even the unregenerate Pascal that he takes their wrongness for granted, and his whole endeavour is to wean the soul from subtler temptations which nature might

¹ *Revue Hebdomadaire*, June 1923.

² Henri Bois, *La Religion de Pascal* (Conférences de "Foi et Vie", Paris, 1912). It may be questioned whether there be any real distinction to be drawn between a strong natural moral sense and a fear of sin as contrary to the will of God. It seems to us that Pascal had to a high degree both this natural revolt from what his conscience told him was wrong and from what he felt to be in opposition to the Divine will. There was no room in his mind or soul for non-ethical religion; he would have strenuously denied the very existence of such a phenomenon.

not recognise as sinful, but which are nevertheless contrary to the will of God because they tend to separate us from Him.

Finally, he has shown that in the last resort religion must be a personal experience. Personal, in that each must live it for himself; that help each other as we may, before God we are ultimately alone; that no "corporate religion", no community activity, can make up for the individual search after holiness. Personal, also, in the sense that creeds, dogmas, systems of theology are no substitutes for faith. "In themselves, dogmas were as cold and dead as Israel's stone Tables of the Law. If a man wished to make the dry bones live he must actually go through the psychological crisis of which dogmas were a very lame translation."¹

And it is to this necessity for individual conversion that Pascal's apologetic reduces itself. "There is no righteous, no, not one. . . . All we like sheep have gone astray." The world is in disorder as a result of individual sin, of individual flouting of God's laws in every department of life. The only remedy is therefore for the individual to be born again, to enter into a new and right relation with God, in which the human will and the divine should be reconciled and harmonised.

¹ St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 424.

BOOK V
THE SAINT

CHAPTER I

Personal Religion

“ONLY grace can make a man into a saint; any one who doubts this does not know what is a saint and a man.”

“Religion”, again wrote Pascal, “is God felt by the heart”;¹ no system can take the place of that direct contact actually experienced by the individual. On that personal experience is based all Pascalian apologetic and theology. We may now ask how Pascal’s own experience fits in with his true exposition of religious truth.

It is of course difficult to make such an absolute distinction. Pascal’s theological system is inevitably the direct fruit of his own experience. His views as to the limitations of reason are the result of his failure to apprehend a living Christianity by the sole power of the intellect; the stress laid on intuition is but the philosophical translation of the mystic experience of November 1654 and of the surrender which either followed or preceded it. The steps in the quest for truth along which Pascal takes us are but those he took himself; he endeavours to lead us along the road by which he himself has travelled.

The essential thing, is, however, that, whatever be the road, you should undertake the journey yourself. The experience must be, as we said, at all points, personal, both in that it must be your own, not of anybody else’s, and in that it is communion

¹ Thought 508.

with a person, a communion so direct and so unmistakable as to produce a certainty which nothing can shake. "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." That is the ultimate certainty of Pascal—a living fellowship.

We have already said that it would be difficult to imagine a more directly Christo-centric religion than Pascal's. Even in 1651, before he had made the greatest of his religious experiences, he wrote that "Just as God only considers men through Christ, so men should consider God only through Christ; only as we consider everything through Christ shall we find anywhere any consolation, edification and satisfaction".¹

His real certainty is "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". But the Incarnation, which was the supreme expression of this love, had been made necessary by human sin; and the awfulness of sin and its tragic consequences in the crucifixion of the Holy One of God were always before Pascal's eyes. This coloured his whole outlook on the world, and made him see life as something inexpressibly serious.

He has in fact been accused of pessimism. As usual, it is necessary to define one's terms. If a pessimist is one whose sadness is caused by lack of hope, Pascal is no pessimist. No Christian can be a pessimist, who has in him the hope of his calling and of eternal life.

At the same time, it is true that Pascal's hope is very far removed from the facile optimism of belief in the inevitability of progress. If he has received too many blessings

¹ Letter on his father's death.

at the hands of God for him to curse life, there is too much suffering all around for him to shout a perpetual *Te Deum*. "Life is a tragedy to him who feels", wrote Goethe, and Pascal is too sensitive a nature for the tragedy of human suffering not to oppress him at times like a burden that will not be shaken off. And this suffering is ultimately traceable to human sin in some form or another—sins of volition or of ignorance, of commission or of omission, the sins of the fathers visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations—and his soul is bowed down in sorrow at the moral tragedy of all the wrong doing this represents, of the centuries during which mankind has flouted God's laws. What store of retribution is not the world laying up for itself? "God's in His Heaven," writes the poet; but that will not necessarily mean that all's right with the world; for if the world defies God, may it not destroy itself by its defiance of the laws made by God for the governance of the universe? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A universe built on moral law cannot endure if moral laws be systematically ignored.

Sin indeed may be forgiven, but Pascal is no universalist. Without believing, as we have seen, in the predestination of certain souls to eternal damnation, he cannot deny the possibility of certain souls being lost. And that is enough to impress any but the most careless with the seriousness of life. He believed, in fact, that the danger for a Christian to become a castaway was very real. "It is much rarer to see men continue in piety than to see them enter upon it." Had he not himself fallen away from grace after his first call of God? Had he not been in danger of utterly losing faith and being swallowed up in the world and its lusts? No wonder therefore that to him salvation had to be worked out in fear and trembling, and life to be taken seriously.

What, in fact, he could not understand was how it was possible for any to take it otherwise. Avowed unbelief he could respect, but indifference to eternal issues was to him a perpetual amazement. Were men all fools? And was not the whole of human existence but a universal fiddling over a burning world? "Look, therefore, carefully how ye walk, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

"The New Testament scriptures are veiled to the Jews, and also to inadequate Christians, and to all who will not hate themselves. But how well disposed one is to hear these scriptures and to know Christ when one truly hates oneself!"¹

There lies the essence of Christian ethics, in Pascal's eyes. It is not a matter of being more or less moral, or complying with this or that commandment; it is denying yourself. Why? Because "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price". Not being your own, you must die to self.

Biographers of Pascal, his sister in the first place, have dwelt at great length on the material asceticism he practised at all times, and particularly during his last years. We are told of his extreme simplicity of life, of his neglect of food, of the nail-studded girdle which he pressed into his side if tempted by pride, of his fastings, of all the rigid austerity which to mediaeval monasticism constituted saintliness. To Pascal the body was not even "Brother Ass", to be held in subjection indeed, but still to be used to the glory of God; it was almost the Evil One himself. But when we think of the torments Pascal had to endure from the body, how far he was from being able to use it, being instead perpetually baulked by it in his service for God, it is less to be wondered at if he prayed to be delivered from the body of this death.

Contemptuous of marriage as "the most dangerous and the

¹ Thought 676.

lowest of Christian conditions", ¹ Pascal had for his only bride "my lady Poverty", loving her because Christ loved her; and loving possessions because they enabled him to assist the poor. He literally sold his goods to give to the poor; he borrowed from the bank in order to give, and when remonstrated with for his extreme generosity caustically remarked "he had noticed that there was no one so poor that he did not manage to leave something behind at his death". ²

But it would be belittling Pascal to see in his material asceticism the highest expression of his Christian self-denial. The real self that had to die was not his body.

We saw in an earlier chapter what a great part family affections played in his life. To his father he owed his mental training and his first spiritual awakening; to his elder sister the motherly care he would not have known without her; to his younger sister his final turning to God, and a sympathy and help that never failed, so that he did not survive her death for a year. To his nephew Étienne Périer he was tenderly attached, and while at Port-Royal he supervised his education with fatherly care. "He was extremely fond of his friends," writes his sister, "and one can say that if no one was ever more worthy of being loved, no one ever knew better how to love, or practised it better."

Who then will gauge the agony of renunciation through which this loving, sensitive soul must have gone before it could spurn human affections as being inimical to love of God, telling his sister not to kiss her children, and deliberately putting on a brusque and cold manner so as to hide the warmth of his feelings, lest people be too affectionate towards him? On a paper found on him after death he had written: "It is unfair that people should become attached to me, even willingly

¹ From Madame Périer's *Life of Pascal*.

² From Madame Périer's *Life of Pascal*.

and joyfully. I would deceive those in whom I awakened such a desire, for I can be nobody's final object, nor can I satisfy them. Am I not near death? The object of their affection will therefore die. Just as I should be guilty in telling a lie, however sweetly I told it, and however pleased I should be at people believing me, so I am guilty if I allow myself to be loved, or attract people towards me, for they must give their lives and cares to being attached to God or seeking Him."¹

A tragic exaggeration, say we, a ghastly misreading of God's intentions in creating man and human love? Yes, certainly. And yet . . . "if any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his own father, and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple".

"And his own life also." What was life to a Pascal if not Science—the joy of research, the intoxication of discovery, the excitement of competition with other scholars? Yet, the lust of the mind had to be destroyed. "If thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off." Several times Pascal thought he had been able to burn his science on the altar of his God—and on the slightest provocation the old ambitions flared up once more and the self-mutilation had to be carried out again, until at last he was able to write to Fermat that "he had given up geometry, because, although it was the finest mental exercise, it was not really worth the absorption of the mind".² This from the greatest mathematician of his age! Again we ask, who will gauge the intensity of the spiritual conflict which led up to such a victory?

An unnecessary battle surely? Was it not possible for Pascal to conciliate his scientific research and his Christian life? Yet how can we tell what a temptation this scientific research may have been to him? We do not mean, of course, that he feared lest science should make him lose his faith; we

¹ Thought 471.

² August 10, 1660.

refer to the subtler temptations of ambition^{*}, of pride, of all that might have meant gaining the world to lose his soul. What do we know of the wrestlings that may have gone on in his mind, of the hours of agony, hoping that this sacrifice should not be demanded? We see but the result. Pascal had to go to the bitter end in the process of self-sacrifice.

This obedience meant self-surrender; but self-surrender meant peace. "The individual will will never be satisfied, even if it could achieve whatever it wanted; but we are satisfied as soon as we give it up."¹ Pascal had learnt the lesson that he that would save his life must lose it.

Are we to say, then, that we should endeavour to make Pascal's outlook and manner of life ours? By no means. It is no belittling of a great soul to say that he tended to look too exclusively upon the tragic side of life and of religion, that in his insistence on God's horror of sin, he overlooked at times the love of God, pitying his children as a father. How far was this sombreness of outlook due to the depressing effects of ill-health, how far to Jansenist tradition, we cannot tell, and it matters little.² It should be possible to realise to the full the heinousness of sin, without forgetting the joy that comes from deliverance and redemption. A little more of Wesley's rejoicing over the triumphs of grace would not have made Pascal a lesser Christian, it might have made him a more winsome personality.

Still, it is not for us to dictate to others what their Christian

¹ Thought 472.

² 'To follow the lead of Catholic critics and put those excesses down to the count of Augustinus is to confuse ailment with cure. Pascal himself told Mdlle de Roannez that her spiritual trials did not spring so much from her present piety as from the relics of a past impiety. In like manner it might be said that his own asceticism was not due to his present religion so much as to the survivals of a former morbidly divided self. Jansenism found him consciously torn in half, inferior and unhappy; it left him consciously unified, superior and happy' (St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 423).

experience should be. Here is perhaps where Pascal failed. Just as we dare not say he was wrong in thinking austerity was the road by which God meant *him* to reach holiness, so he forgot that God's methods vary with individual cases, and that the road He chose for Pascal might not be that meant for all to tread. There are diversities of gifts, or training, of vocation, of spiritual discipline.

And yet it is good for a generation that seems to confuse the coming of the Kingdom of God with the growth of material prosperity to be reminded that, unless Christianity be meaningless, the human sin that crucified the Lord of Life is present in their heart; that no real progress is possible without discipline, individual and collective, both from within and from without. There is a deep philosophy in the pithy saying of a great man of God,¹ that "the love of God is salted not sugared". Pascal would have understood the meaning of those words.

Nor did this austerity and sombreness of outlook mean absence of joy. "Tears of joy," wrote Pascal in 1654; and it does not seem that this joy and peace ever departed from him. It has been truly observed² that there was far more melancholy in Molière, the comic writer, than in Pascal. "We need two things for sanctification, sorrows and pleasure." As Tertullian says: "We must not believe that the life of Christians is one of sadness. One but leaves some pleasures for others that are greater." "Pray without ceasing," says St. Paul; "in everything give thanks, rejoice always." It is the joy "of having found God which causes the sadness of having offended Him and the whole change in one's life."³

The joy of Pascal is thus the joy of individual redemption,

¹ The late Pastor Georges Appia, of the French Lutheran Church.

² By Sainte Beuve, *Port-Royal*, iii. p. 275.

³ Thought of Pascal, quoted by Faugère in his edition of Pascal's works, i. p. 47.

of individual communion. He felt in a particular way the fact that whatever might be the life of others he had been personally redeemed, personally called to sanctification and to the doing of God's will. "I thought of thee in my agony: I shed such and such drops of blood for thee . . . thy conversion is my concern; fear not . . . I am more thy friend than so and so; for I have done for thee more than they have; and they would not endure what I have endured for thee, nor would they die for thee at a time when thou wast unfaithful and cruel, as I did, and am ready to do, and actually do in the person of my elect and in the Holy Sacrament."¹

Christianity for Pascal was not "working towards such and such an ideal, practising a certain morality; it was obedience to particular individual commands of Christ".² For Pascal, God's will meant years of intense suffering, and a premature death, leaving unfinished the work to which he had felt called. He saw in suffering the normal lot of the Christian—partly as an expiation for sins, partly, chiefly perhaps, as the true way of entering into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

It is a far cry from the bare room of the seventeenth-century scientist to the luxurious bedroom in which a Swiss maiden of the twentieth century died at the age of twenty-five, after many years of a torture that was worse, in its unceasing keenness, than Pascal's sufferings, great as these were. But truly the Pascalian view of suffering has probably never received a more illuminating commentary than the lines in which Adèle Kamm gave her philosophy of human suffering.³

"I believe that the only spring of constant joy in suffering is a more or less vague feeling of a compulsory expiation, although one can scarcely speak of it. . . . I am experiencing the most

¹ "The Mystery of Jesus" (Thought 553).

² *Le Semeur*, January 1927.

³ Seippel, *Adèle Kamm*, pp. 151, 175, 178.

thrilling joy, unknown to most mortals, that of knowing that I am suffering a just penalty sent by God for the expiation not only of my own sins, but of sins in general, of human tares, in which we should succumb without the expiating sacrifice of Christ and the members of the Church.

“It is my profound conviction—the source of my joy in suffering—that suffering accepted submissively can become a great blessing for us; but I believe we can do more, and that by accepting our cross willingly, and uniting it to that of Christ, we can have a share, in some imperceptible manner, in the advance of the final triumph of good over evil. This is so magnificent a goal that the idea of being able to hasten on the final expiation of sin, by uniting willingly and joyfully our sufferings to those of Christ, is a motive power of unbelievable vitality of which I daily make the sweet experience.

“It is good to live, even on a bed of suffering, when harmony reigns between our work, our conscience, our soul and God. The highest happiness is to be found in that harmony.”

“Fellowship with Christ in his sufferings”—nothing would summarise more fully the essence of Pascal’s experience. A mystic he certainly was, in every meaning of that much-abused term; but his mysticism was Christian mysticism, just as his theology was essentially Christo-centric.

Boutroux summarises it in a felicitous page. “Christ is to Pascal first of all a living person, a real being, who loved, suffered and lives on as comforter, friend, confident, and saviour. Then he is the Messiah. Finally he is the key of all History.

“It is our duty to love God. Yet we cannot. We must find the solution of this problem in an order of things that transcends us. Christ is the solution. He realises this by sacrificing Himself and by making us new creatures by this sacrifice. He saves us by being the Way, the Truth (as to

ourselves and as to God), and the Life (by working out in us, with us, the work of regeneration).”¹

And in the *Thoughts* we find the same idea, more fully developed. “Not only do we only know God through Christ but we only know ourselves through Christ. . . . Apart from Christ we do not know what is our own life, or our death, or God, in ourselves.”²

Fellowship with Christ means conformity with Christ—the quest for sanctification and holiness. “Be ye holy, even as I am holy.” We may feel that Pascal thought too exclusively that the only road to holiness lay along austerity, ascetism, the denial of human affections, and of other God-given good things; we may especially regret that he should have tried to impose upon others a method of discipline which might not have been God’s will for them, but we cannot gainsay that his road was bringing him to the desired goal. “Happy would he be”, writes Ste Beuve,³ “who would be worthy to describe the holiness of Pascal” —not indeed that Pascal would claim to have achieved—but he pressed forward daily to a greater conformity with his Lord.

If by a saint we mean “one who makes it easier for others to believe in God”,⁴ then indeed we may claim holiness for him of whose life Bayle the freethinker said that “it was worth more than a hundred volumes of sermons and far more able to disarm unbelievers. The extraordinary humility and devotion of Pascal has convinced sceptics far more than if one were to let loose upon them a dozen missionaries.”

Humility and devotion—no easy achievements for a Pascal. His was no *anima naturaliter sancta*. We have seen how

¹ Boutroux, Lectures on Pascal given in the Sorbonne (*Revue des Cours et Conférences*, 1898).

² Thought 548.

³ *Port-Royal*, iii. p. 338.

⁴ Said by Archbishop Soederblöm, of Upsala, at a Student Christian Movement Conference.

proud he was of his scientific discoveries, how reluctant to share the credit for them, how childishly sensitive to criticism. Nor was it easy to place growth in grace above progress in learning, to rank goodness as greater than intellect. "God prefers sinners to fools", wrote Renan's grandson.¹ "No," says Pascal, "all the movements of the mind are not worth a slight movement of the heart"; but it was not the natural man who thus spoke. Only grace could make a saint of a man and could inspire the confession of faith of one who must have known himself to be a genius.

"I love poverty because Christ loved it. I love wealth because it gives the means of helping the poor. I keep faith with all; I do not render evil to those who injure me, but wish them a situation similar to mine, where one receives neither good nor evil from men. I try and be just, truthful, sincere and faithful to all men, and I have a tenderness of heart for those whom God has united most closely to me. Whether I am alone or before men, I have before my eyes in all my doings the sight of God who is to judge them, and to whom I have offered them all. These are my feelings, and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer Who has put them in me, and who, of one full of weakness, wretchedness, lust, pride, and ambition has made one who is free from all of these, thanks to the grace of Him to whom all glory is due, there being nothing in me but wretchedness and error." ²

"Hero and Saint", said of him Charles Péguy,³ who was himself more of a Pascalian than he realised. And only a hero could have become a saint by the particular road to sanctification along which God had called Blaise Pascal.

¹ Ernest Psichari.

² Thought 550.

³ Péguy, *Œuvres complètes*, iv. p. 348.

CHAPTER II

The Last Years

THE biographer of Pascal is unfortunately unable to give a full account of his life from the time he desisted from the *Provinciales* until his death. Try as we may, the evidence is not to be found; we can fill up gaps here and there, but no more. All we can tell with any certainty is that those five years were not exclusively spent in preparation for the *Apology*.

I

The study of those years illustrates the extreme care with which we must use the biography written by his sister. According to her, from the time of his conversion "at the age of thirty" (he was actually thirty-one) he gave up "all his time to prayer, meditation and the reading of the Scriptures, which he knew by heart. This for the next five years; for the last four of his life can hardly be called existence. He was able to do no work whatever during these years, nor to give any advice to all those who came to him."¹ We have already

¹ We are told by his sister that "he often saw people of great intelligence and high birth, who, wishing to pursue some kind of retreat, asked for his advice and followed it very exactly; others, having doubts on matters of faith, and knowing how enlightened he was on the matter, came to consult him and always went away satisfied; so those people, who are still living Christian lives, still witness to-day that it is to his advice and counsel that they owe all the good they do now". We have, unfortunately, no fuller details of Pascal's work as a lay spiritual director.

seen that this statement is inaccurate as regards the preparation of the *Apology*; and we shall see that, ill as he was, he was able to do in those four years of bare existence, of "languishing", what many would call hard work.

What is certain is that, partly perhaps owing to the severity of his asceticism, there took place about 1657 a grievous deterioration in an already seriously shaken health. From this time onwards there is scarcely a line which is not written at the cost of intense suffering. Life is a perpetual struggle, and frequent echoes of this are to be found in his work. It would apparently be easier to tell which parts of his body were whole than to say where he suffered, particularly as his sister's descriptions of his ailments are vague and unscientific. He evidently suffered from terrible headaches, which debarred him for weeks on end from any kind of occupation; his digestion was so wrecked as to prevent him from eating any but the lightest food, and from swallowing any cold liquids, so that even the numerous medicines he was made to take had to be heated and then could only be swallowed drop by drop. He became a virtual cripple, walking only with great difficulty, and journeys became a terrible undertaking; it took him twenty-two days to go from Paris to Clermont-Ferrand, as he could not endure more than three or four leagues a day in a coach.

With whatever caution some of Madame Périer's statements must be taken, we may nevertheless accept her general description as to her brother's way of life. Soon after his conversion, he had determined to give up the world, and "to cut out of his life all superfluities, even at the expense of his health—to give up all pleasures, and all that was not strictly necessary. He made his bed himself, went to fetch his food from the kitchen and carried it into his room, and brought back empty plates into the kitchen; only availing himself of

domestic help for the preparation of his meals, shopping, and other things he was absolutely incapable of doing. To show enjoyment or dislike of food, to eat more or less than an amount previously fixed upon as necessary for the day's needs, he called pandering to the flesh, declaring that the needs of the stomach, not the appetite, had to be satisfied. He had a natural desire for articles of the best quality and workmanship, and for a comfortably fitted room, in which he could have all he needed within easy reach, as well as many other things which are usually done without any scruple, as being free from any evil. But such was not his opinion: he said nothing was liable to destroy love of poverty as this search for the comfortable, this liking for the best; and as to workmen, he said we should employ the poorest and the most godly, without troubling about superfluous technical ability."

The above description of Pascal's way of life is undoubtedly accurate in the main; but raises some problems of chronology. Madame Périer speaks of his rigid self-denial coming very soon after his conversion; but the abbé Beurrier, in the *Memoirs* to which further reference will be made, speaks of Pascal having, *two years before his death*, "sold the greater part of his goods—his coach, horses, tapestries, handsome furniture, plate, and even most of his books; given the money to the poor, dismissed his servants, gone to lodge at his sister's, in order to avoid the upkeep of a separate household".

From these details it would appear that, as late as 1660, Pascal was still endowed with many worldly goods and kept a considerable establishment. But certain critics consider that Beurrier's statement refers to a retreat which took place not two years but six months before Pascal's death; in which case Pascal would have been fairly wealthy and comfortable almost to the end.

In any case, Beurrier is not altogether accurate, for it is

not true that Pascal moved to his sister's for the sake of economy; she tells us herself that he did so in order to avoid the removal to hospital of a child ill of smallpox, "the little son of a worthy couple to whom he gave lodging in his house in order not to be absolutely alone therein". It was impossible for him to visit his sister and her children as long as there was infection under his own roof; so he went to live altogether with the Périers, and as it happened, never returned to his own house, for it was three days after this move that he was seized with what was to be his last illness.

We see from these conflicting details, which it is impossible entirely to harmonise, how difficult it is sometimes to establish an objectively accurate account of the life of a great man. It is evident that Pascal was an ascete: it is also clear that his sister wishes to make him out to have been such from the very moment of his conversion, just as she would like us to believe that he never gave another thought to any subject but religion. The only conclusion we may draw is that his asceticism, like his abandonment of all but spiritual pursuits, was a gradual process, with occasional sudden decisions, not always persevered in; just as Pascal returned to scientific pursuits after having as he thought, given them up, so he may very well have sold his goods, given up his house for a time, and then realised that he needed for his studies the quiet of his own house and a bare minimum of the amenities of life—books in particular.

What is abundantly clear is that he was a generous soul, who never felt able to enjoy anything if he thought others were in need. Giving to the poor was, in his eyes, "the particular vocation of Christians, by which Christ would judge the world, the lack of charity being enough to ensure damnation. He would borrow to give, as we saw before; he never refused alms; he was always exhorting his sister to take her children to visit poor people, saying that "such visits were

most useful, as the sight of poverty and destitution would soften the hardest heart and make it easy to do without useless comforts and superfluities”.

Whenever any general schemes for the relief of poverty was put forward, he always objected that we were called not to relieve poverty in general but individual poor people. Not indeed that he disapproved of hospitals—he bequeathed money to two, in Paris and Clermont—but he thought such large scale undertakings were “only for a few people whom God evidently called, but were not the general vocation of ordinary folk, as was the daily care of particular poor people”.

“A purely intellectual religion would not be within the reach of the people.”¹ Whether dealing with the deepest mysteries of the faith or with the pettiest details of practical daily life, Pascal never forgot he was the disciple of Him who spoke such stern words about causing one of these little ones to stumble. This desire to serve Christ in the person of His poor haunted him to his dying day. When he felt himself to be ill beyond recovery, he begged for some poor invalid to be brought into his bedroom so as to share with him the skilled care he was receiving. This being thought impracticable, he asked to be taken to a hospital for incurables; the doctors promised to do this as soon as he could be moved, but as a matter of fact, this never proved possible.

II

The *Apology*, we have said, did not take up the whole of his time; he still found some leisure for his beloved mathematics. His scientific friends had begun by fearing lest he should forget science in some Jansenist retreat; Chapelain, the academician, mourned over the loss to science of this new

¹ Thought 251.

Archimedes. But this abandonment of mathematics did not last, and some of his most brilliant discoveries date from this period.

His attention was turned to the problem of the curve described by a revolving wheel, and he soon found himself involved, under an assumed name, in public competition with some of the most distinguished mathematicians of the time, including Sir Christopher Wren, and Wallis of Oxford. This was followed by research on the properties of the arithmetical triangle.

The curious feature of this last phase of his scientific researches is the theatrical staging he gave them. He offered a prize for the solution of some of the problems he had just solved, competed for it and won it under an assumed name, quarrelled violently with several of the other competitors, and finally published an account of the whole business that must be described as shockingly garbled. It is difficult to recognise the humble Christian thinker in this touchy, affected seeker after notoriety. We can find some excuse for him in his disordered nerves, and see in the whole business a return of the *Provinciales* polemics—one of the disputants was a Jesuit father, and Port-Royal had been trying to make capital out of the discoveries of their great recruit: his friends may have unwisely urged him to unprofitable controversies.

At any rate, repentance came, and that with a vengeance. Realising how in his case scientific research and disputation were taking him away from the search after spiritual truth and the salvation of his soul, he took the final step of cutting out from his life those occupations which he said were really incompatible with the pursuit of higher things.

His already quoted farewell to mathematics he wrote from Clermont-Ferrand to Fermat in August 1660, having fled from Paris to his native town, partly for the sake of his health, partly,

according to Strowski, to escape from the friends who sought to embroil him into further scientific controversies. Fermat had written asking for an interview; Pascal's reply is a definite closing of the door. The mathematician is already dead.

III

His absence from Paris seems to have improved his health for awhile; at any rate, he found time and strength to undertake work of an entirely new character. We find him acting as a kind of "tutor by correspondence" to "a noble-born child" whose name we do not know. He wrote for this unexpected pupil three "discourses" on *The Estate of the Great*. They are strange utterances, particularly if one compares them with certain of the *Thoughts*. The Pascal of paradox, of the piler-up of apparent contradictions, gives himself full sway in those elements of political philosophy.

More clearly than ever do we see here his extraordinary capacity for holding simultaneously and welding into a synthesis the most apparently contradictory views. It would be difficult to imagine any more safely conservative statements than his insistence on obedience to authority, the crime of resistance, the necessity for subordination. But, on the other hand, no revolutionary writer has ever been more scathing about the utter hollowness of all authority and law, the purely accidental origin of all human greatness, the utter vanity of earthly dignities.

What is justice? he asks. It is what is, the power of the strong to enforce order, a creation of habit. In reality might is right. We must obey law, indeed; but not because of any divine right of kings¹ or of laws. To what do kings owe their

¹ This in spite of Madame Périer's statement that Pascal believed that "in a state where royal power was already established one cannot violate the respect owed to it without some kind of sacrilege, since it is not only an image of the power of God, but a sharing of that power which could only be

position? Both to the common sense and to the stupidity of the people; they are but poor wretches who dare not really think, and who must be perpetually entertained if they are not to go mad. They are useful for keeping order, as are all magistrates and officials; and as disorder is the most terrible of evils, resistance to authority is wrong and must be crushed when it occurs. But do not speak of innate justice or natural law.

Having had, as it were, his fling at the powers that be, Pascal comes back to solid earth with the idea that in practice we must accept authority and give to those who exercise it, whether by office or by birth, outward respect and obedience. It is the accident of birth that has made you a duke; your soul and your body are no different from that of a boatman. I will pay outward respect to your estate, but do not ask for my inward respect unless you deserve it in other ways. Outward distinctions are useful in settling outward precedence: you have four footmen and I have one; I will let you go in first, and thus peace is maintained.

What rule of life is he going to suggest to the young duke? Simply this: to act up to what is expected of his "dukeship", which is, to be a gentleman, *un honnête homme*. Do not force your talent but act up to your lights. We cannot forbear to quote the witty summary of this worldly wisdom given by an anonymous writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1911:

THE COMMANDMENTS OF A GENTLEMAN

1. Never speak of self (*le moi est haïssable*).
2. Never repeat what you hear.
3. Be ready to take trouble on slight occasions.

opposed by patent resistance to the divine order". The *Thoughts* show clearly that however Pascal might counsel outward obedience, his grounds for that obedience would not have pleased a Louis XIV. or a Charles I.

4. Be sparing of excuses.
5. Claim no precedence.
6. Be neither Sir Oracle nor Buffoon.
7. Be sincere.
8. Be generous.
9. Be staunch.

And after that you will be damned like a gentleman.

In cauda venenum. "All this does not go very far, Pascal admits; if you go no farther you will not avoid damnation, but at least you will be damned like a gentleman. Others damn themselves foolishly, by avarice, cruelty, debauchery, violence, anger, blasphemy. The road I show you is doubtless more gentlemanly, but truly, it is always extremely foolish to allow oneself to be damned at all, and therefore you must not stop at this."

Behind this half-serious, half-sarcastic advice one sees the application to political problems of Pascal's favourite philosophy of orders. There is an order of political greatness and power, which has nothing to do with the order of individual innate greatness. It is impossible to establish any kind of connection or relation between those two orders and useless therefore to make the attempt or worry about it. The wise men will thus accept the political order, its apparent stupidities and inconsistencies, as long as it fulfils its essential function, which is to preserve that external material order without which any civilised community existence is impossible; it is not based on morality or natural justice; therefore it will not act justly or morally.

This is, of course, a counsel of despair. It gives up any hope of an external moral order, and leaves the field free to political immoralists, to a Richelieu, to a Bismarck. Pascal's political philosophy appears indistinguishable from that of Machiavelli or Hobbes: the rewards of politics will go to the most unscrupulous.

We are at first painfully struck by this contrast between Pascal's political cynicism and his stern insistence on private ethics. But, after all, it can be easily explained: it is but the logical conclusion of the doctrine of original sin. How can there be justice or morals in unregenerate men? There is but one justice, but one morality—it is that which comes from God. All else is sinful and corrupt. A society made up mostly of unregenerate men can only be based on "concupiscence", natural lusts; it cannot achieve morality or justice: you cannot grow figs on thistles.

What then is to be the attitude of the Christian to this political system? It is here that Pascal leaves his theory incomplete. Obey as long as it functions, he says. But what if it ceases to function? What about a successful revolution? At what precise moment is the Christian to transfer his obedience to the winning side? Is Revolution wrong as long as it fails, and right when it succeeds? Pascal himself condemned in no measured terms the civil wars of the Fronde, but what would he have said if they had succeeded? And another question arises. If the whole political order be based on "concupiscence", should Christians take a share in working it, thereby accepting responsibility for its misdeeds?

To raise this practical question is to suggest the real solution of the problem. Pascal would have answered that all this discussion about the political order of concupiscence was largely speculative; that there might be no real justice in human affairs from a purely philosophical or theological standpoint, but that, of course, society should be governed as morally and righteously as possible, and that of course Christians should take as large a share as they could in its affairs. Don't expect the impossible, but make things as decent as you can.

Pascal had, as a matter of fact, his natural political prefer-

ences. Coming from a family of lawyers and civil servants, he would see with disfavour the growth of an irresponsible absolutism raising itself above law and tradition; and his strong local patriotism would make him distrustful of centralisation. At the same time he would be an instinctive conservative, distrustful of innovations, fearful of anarchy.

The practical conclusion to be drawn is surely this: in the long run, your political philosophies and systems will depend on your conception of human nature.¹ If you believe mankind to be composed of rogues and fools, you cannot prevent the rogues from governing the fools. But, in fact, Pascal never really went below the surface of political science; he noted apparent contradictions and absurdities—that of war, in particular—but never attempted to think out or formulate a Christian theory of politics or social reform.²

IV

It is a far way from political philosophy to the organising of an omnibus service; and it is not one of the least interesting of the paradoxes of this strange life that the creation of the first omnibus company in Paris should have been the idea and the work of Pascal. No one before him had apparently thought of running along the main thoroughfares public coaches available to any one at a low price. There were many difficulties in the way, some people thinking that such a novelty would be a source of disorder and rioting, others that it would

¹ Maritain, *Revue Universelle*, 1^{er} août 1923.

² M. de St. Aulaire, in his lecture to *Les Amis de Pascal* on Pascal as a political and religious thinker, and M. Souriau in *Le Jansénisme des Pensées*, seem to us to read into Pascal more than can be legitimately deduced, in their attempt to make him, the former a staunch bourgeois conservative, the latter an ardent republican and almost a rebel. "A plague on both your houses", Pascal would have said.

be a hopeless failure. But the necessary authorisations were obtained, and the first omnibus ran on the 18th of March 1662. Busses were run every half-hour; special police were called out to prevent any disturbances; every coach was accompanied by a royal guard. From the very first morning they were constantly full; several women even rode in them, and Pascal's own sister, wishing to take one, saw no less than five drive past all full. All along the routes such crowds came to see them go by, that it was virtually a half holiday: there was a general complaint at more busses not being put on; the shopkeepers of other thoroughfares petitioned for services to be run in their district, and an attempt at crushing the scheme by ridicule was promptly stopped by the king himself, who expressed a wish that a line should run past the royal palace.

It is, of course, difficult to tell exactly why Pascal should have thought it worth giving any of his declining strength to such a money-making concern; all we know is that he was always short of money to give away, and that as soon as the omnibus scheme was on foot he endeavoured—in vain, as it happened—to obtain an advance of a thousand francs on his expected share in the profits to send to the relief fund for the terrible distress then prevailing in the valley of the Loire, near Blois.

Pascal's omnibus company, we may add, does not seem to have had a long existence,¹ but it is another of the numerous instances in which the highest mysticism is allied to the most practical type of mind.

With the year 1661, Pascal's health is getting worse and worse, and it is not too much to say that the shadow of death is beginning to hover over him. He is increasingly retiring

¹ They disappeared very soon, says Larousse's *Encyclopædia*; and no omnibus system was reintroduced until 1828.

from worldly affairs, and devoting the remains of his fast ebbing strength to his *Apology*.

But at the very time when he thought he had done with controversies and problems, he found himself suddenly involved in the most bitter of them all.

CHAPTER III

Pascal and Port-Royal

"I AM not of Port-Royal," wrote Pascal in the seventeenth Provincial Letter, "and have told you so before. Even were Port-Royal to hold those five propositions you condemn—and which I abhor as impious—you can conclude nothing thence against me, as my sole earthly attachment is to the Catholic Apostolic Church. . . . In vain do you try and attack me in the person of those people with whom you think I am linked. But I fear neither for myself nor for anybody else, being linked up to no group or individual."

The full and critical account of Pascal's relations with Port-Royal itself still remains to be written. It would involve a detailed account of the inner and not always edifying history of Port-Royal itself. Port-Royal was by no means always a united band of brothers and sisters; there were inner cliques and sets, quarrels and jealousies, which Nicole calls "the civil wars of Port-Royal", and not even persecution sufficed to restore internal unity. Nicole and Arnauld were intimate friends, but this friendship excited jealousy, and Racine tells us¹ that Mother Angélique endeavoured to use Pascal to sow dissension between those two "whom neither she nor the many others could bear to see so united". Her ally was M. de Sacy, who respected no one except M. Singlin, the preacher.

¹ In his *History of Port-Royal*.

Refusing as he did to take side in those quarrels, Pascal was never wholly trusted or confided in by either party. It seems clear that he was never in the inner councils of Port-Royal, being always looked upon with some suspicion as a man of the world, a scientist, a stranger. He was too immersed in his own studies; and these studies, we might add, were looked upon by many with disfavour as being perhaps scarcely in accordance with the traditions of the house.

Owing to his studies, the virtual retirement from the world which followed his starting upon the *Apology* and his subsequent ill-health, as well as his absence from Paris, Pascal does not seem to have been in any close contact with the Port-Royal community for some time after the cessation of the *Provincial Letters*. Those years were years of quiet for Port-Royal; theological disputations had died down after a while; the miracle of the Holy Thorn had startled public opinion in a favourable way, and Mazarin had no liking for religious persecution. He turned a deaf ear to all anti-Jansenist resolutions put forward at Church assemblies.

The situation changed with the death of Mazarin in March 1661. The young king, Louis XIV., who now took power in his hands, had since 1654 as confessor and spiritual director one of the leaders of the Jesuits, Father Annat, a violent anti-Jansenist whom Pascal had pilloried in the *Provincial Letters*. With this change the days of liberty for Jansenism were past.

"All those who knew him," wrote Racine, "know that, reasonable as he was in other matters, Father Annat knew neither reason nor justice where Jansenists were concerned; and no one dared utter before the king opinions contrary to those of his confessor. At every episcopal assembly resolutions were passed condemning the alleged new heresy, and the king was urged to be a new Constantine or Theodosius in the extirpation of evil. . . . It was impossible for truth to reach his

ears; any one putting forward a different point of view was branded as a Jansenist. . . . No wonder, therefore, that, on taking up the reins of government at the death of Cardinal Mazarin, the king thought himself bound to rid his kingdom of this alleged sect.”¹

The anti-Jansenist persecutions, which were about to begin and to continue until the annihilation of the whole movement, seem to have been therefore forced on the king by the French clergy, the Jesuits in particular. It is not irrelevant to remark that the Huguenot persecutions, which began about the same time and continued, after culminating in the Revocation of the Edit de Nantes, until the end of the reign, also sprang from the yielding of Louis XIV. to the demands of the clergy and to the pressure exerted on him by his successive confessors, who showed him in the suppression of heresy a method of making reparation for the sins of his private life.

By a royal decree of April 1661 every person who was under episcopal authority was required to sign a formula—first drafted in 1657 but never hitherto enforced—to the effect that “he condemned with his heart and with his mouth the doctrine of the five propositions of Jansenius as contained in his book *The Augustinus*, and as condemned by the Pope and the Bishops; which doctrine is not that of St. Augustine, for Jansenius has wrongly interpreted it and has deformed his teaching”.

It looked as if Port-Royal was at last going to be definitely faced with the dilemma of submission or deliberate resistance. But there were many in the Church who were anxious to avoid this separation of sheep from goats, and the Vicar General of the then absent Archbishop of Paris drew up an episcopal

¹ In the original MS. “dangerous” had been erased and “alleged” substituted. The Jansenists never admitted their own existence as a separate sect.

charge or "Mandement" which virtually took away from the formula any real meaning, saying in effect that the signing of the formula was a mere form, and did not commit the signatories to the approval or condemnation of Jansenism.

Had Port-Royal accepted this way out, the storm might have blown over; but at the very time when the anti-Jansenists, furious at the conciliatory character of this document, were getting it annulled by Rome, the nuns of Port-Royal, as distinct from the men, declared the signing under any conditions to be an act of weakness, and determined not to sign except by adding a rider to the formula, to the effect that, while condemning the five propositions, they did not agree that these formed an accurate summary of the teaching of Jansenius. "If bishops," said Pascal's sister, "have the pluck of girls, then girls must have the pluck of bishops."

The resistance of the women might have soon collapsed, had it not received support from an unexpected quarter. Pascal suddenly appeared as the opponent of any compromise.

It was, of course, inevitable that he should be drawn into the quarrel. However much Port-Royal might endeavour to hold him away at arm's length, public opinion saw in him one of the most distinguished—perhaps the greatest—of all the representatives of Jansenism, so that it was scarcely possible for none of the parties to appeal to him for support.

After some apparent hesitations, he came out as the champion of the nuns, and declared that even the time-honoured distinction drawn between fact and right was inadequate, and that the only moral attitude to take was that of absolute refusal to sign the formula. He admitted indeed that the acceptance of the formula, as recommended in the "Mandement", might be right for beneficed clergy, who must not be diverted from their direct parish work by theological disputations. But for the Port-Royal nuns, whose essential vocation was testimony to

truth, and particularly to those truths rediscovered in St. Augustine, it would be betrayal of their mission to yield on so fundamental an issue.¹

This stand inevitably involved him in the most violent quarrels with his Port-Royal friends, who were in favour of compromise. On being reminded by them that Port-Royal had always stood in the last resort for obedience to Catholic Authority and the Holy See, he answered that truth was the first thing: and on being warned by his friends of the danger of such an attitude, he replied that "the Pope and the whole Church had engaged in a devilish conspiracy to condemn the teaching of Jansenius, whatever it was,"—*i.e.* irrespective of its real orthodoxy.

Into the details of this quarrel we need not enter. Letters and pamphlets were exchanged couched in bitter terms, in which Port-Royal accused Pascal of misrepresentation and treachery; not, as it will be noticed, on the grounds of his having abandoned them, but on that of being, as it were, more of a Jansenist than they themselves were—of wishing to drive them into a corner from which there could be no real escape. Pascal replied with bitterness that what mattered was not Port-Royal or the Papacy, but truth.

There is little doubt that Pascal's attitude was largely influenced by that of his dearly loved sister Jacqueline. She appeared from the very start as the life and soul of the resistance party. "I can no longer disguise the sorrow which goes to my very heart at seeing the only persons to whom God has entrusted His truth so unfaithful to Him as not to have the courage

¹ There was a tradition that Pascal was the real inspirer of the first Mandement, in which case his later denunciation of the document would involve serious self-contradictions. But there is no contemporary direct reference to Pascal as its author; and M. Jovy has, to our mind, shown conclusively that all the allusions hitherto taken as referring to Pascal can be applied equally well to several others, and particularly to Arnauld (Jovy, *Pascal inédit*, ii. pp. 177-180).

to risk suffering, and even death, in the confessing of the truth. . . . I do admire the subtlety and cleverness of the Mandement. But for faithful souls, who know and uphold truth and the Catholic Church, to have resort to disguise and compromise! I don't think it has ever been seen in past centuries, and I hope we shall all die rather than suffer such an abomination to enter the Church. . . . Which of us would not be filled with horror for himself if, having been present at Pilate's Council when Christ came up for trial, he had been satisfied with an ambiguous expression of opinion which might have led people to believe that he agreed with the condemnation, although he gave his words a contrary meaning? . . . Come what may, poverty, dispersion, prison, death, all this is nothing to me in comparison with the agony in which I should pass the rest of my days, had I been wretched enough to make alliance with death in so splendid an opportunity for rendering to God the vows we pronounced with our lips."

While the storm raged, Jacqueline Pascal died, of a broken heart at having been driven to yield when the nuns accepted, in June 1661, to sign the formula with the declaration suggested in the Mandement—a death all the more tragic that this first yielding was made of no effect by the annulling of the Mandement in July and August, by Papal brief and Royal decree, and the substitution of a second Mandement ordering the signature without any reservation or addition (31st October 1661).

In all this bitter controversy the real point of interest to us is, of course, Pascal's personal attitude towards the Church and towards Port-Royal. He appears to have been on the eve of a breach. He seems to have forgotten that he once wrote "that all virtues, martyrdoms, austerities, and good works are useless outside the Church and outside the communion of the Head of the Church, who is the Pope. I shall never separate myself from that communion. At least I pray God to grant me

this grace, otherwise I should be lost for ever.”¹ He now writes of the Church having made a pact with deceit; and when his Port-Royal friends hesitate to follow him, he turns round on them and accuses them of cowardice and treachery; of casuistry and compromise; in fact, he directs against them what may be termed “reversed *Provincial Letters*”. It is difficult to imagine a more deeply tragic situation.

But at the very moment when he was apparently about to overstep the boundary of obedience, something held him back. Towards the end of 1661 he appears to have gone through some kind of crisis, which completely transformed his outlook. Something, we know not what,² seems to have made him perceive the sin for a Catholic of heresy and schism. He drew back, horrorstruck, from the danger to which he had been so near—realising that there could be no real truth in contradiction to that of the Church, that love of Truth separated from the spirit of obedience was worthless.

Therefore he abandoned all theological disputation and gave himself up to meditation and preparation for what he felt to be the approaching end, telling the priest, who attended him during what was to be his last illness, “that he had let all those matters alone, that he had been dragged (*embarrassé*) into the party of those gentlemen, but for the last two years had retired from it because they were going too far in the matter of grace, and had not as much submission to the Pope as they should; that nevertheless he mourned over the prevailing relaxation of Christian morality, and for the last two years had clung entirely to the matter of his salvation, and to a scheme he had against

¹ In a letter to Mdle. de Roannez, 1656.

² This may have been to a great extent bitter disappointment over the compromising casuistry of Port-Royal. The testing time had come, and they had failed to stand the test. Might not this failure be, in Pascal's eyes, an indication of some fundamental wrongness of the very doctrine to which they dared not remain faithful? (see Jovy, *Pascal inédit*, ii. p. 184).

atheists and compromisers of his day in matters of religion. Finally he declared that he was dying as a good Catholic, keeping to the teaching of the Church on those great matters, and desiring to be in perfect submission to the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ."

This abrupt change of opinion is not as strange as might appear at first sight. A logical thinker like Pascal, a man as thorough in his outlook and conduct, could not adopt for any length of time, or even consider at all, a halfway house based on compromise and subtle distinctions that might have been imagined by his Jesuit enemies. He could only adopt one of two positions—either the point-blank refusal to sign a declaration that condemned a theological opinion he believed to be true, or an acceptance of that declaration, either on the ground of the duty of implicit obedience to an authority higher than his own private judgement, or because of a weakening of his own convictions as to the truth of that particular opinion.

Some time between the end of 1661 and his death in August 1662 Pascal passed from the first to the second attitude. The precise when and wherefore must remain obscure. The usually accepted view is that Pascal maintained his heretical and rebellious attitude until after the *second* Mandement (*i.e.*, later than November 1661). This view springs from the tradition that the pamphlet entitled *L'Écrit sur la signature* was written by him at that particular time—a tradition based on statements of Nicole and Madame Périer. But it has been shown by now that Madame Périer's chronology cannot always be trusted, and there are other important testimonies to the effect that Pascal's pamphlet was composed in *June* 1661, on the occasion of the *first* Mandement. Those testimonies have been hitherto ignored because of the universal tendency to believe that Pascal remained to the end an impenitent Jansenist—in

which case the precise date of the pamphlet is obviously unimportant.

But once we move away from that position to the new standpoint of Pascal's withdrawal from Jansenism, it becomes very important to date as exactly as we can the latest definite expression we possess of his out-and-out Jansenist views. It is evident that the longer the interval between such an expression and the expression of contrary views, the less difficult it is to explain a change of outlook. Further, while resistance to the first Mandement, which was an avowed compromise and did not enjoin definite submission, might be defended without direct rebellion, resistance to the second Mandement, with its unequivocal demand for absolute and unquestioning obedience, could not be advised without a direct breach. It put all Jansenists in front of the inescapable dilemma of recantation or rebellion.

We believe it is impossible fully to explain the attitude of a devout Catholic brought suddenly to the dilemma of submission or revolt. It is certainly beside the point to say that Pascal—or any other in similar circumstances—"ought to have had the courage of his convictions". Of which conviction? it may be asked; of a particular point of abstruse theology? or of a lifelong belief in the divine institution and inspiration of the Church? We see no lack of courage in Pascal—or in any other man in the same position—seeing in submission the courage of a conviction older and more deep-rooted than that involved in the doctrine of grace. It is another question, of course, when, as in the case of Luther or Calvin, the belief in the authority of the Church itself gets shaken as a result of the acceptance of a new doctrine, but of this we see no sign in Pascal; he remained to the end a believer in the divine authority of Church and Papacy.

"It is not the first time, nor the last, that an honest man

has clung to Rome for the sake of the centralised force she can dispose of in the conflict against sin and in the task of turning Godwards the thoughts of men.”¹

We believe that the outward break was but the expression of an inner separation of which Pascal was only half conscious, but which is to be seen in a study of his writings. It is not, we confess, without some reluctance that we have been driven to the views adopted in this chapter, of a Pascal gradually drawing further and further away from Port-Royal to the general life of the Church. The picture of Pascal as the leader of a great movement for Catholic reform is more attractive to us than that of a Pascal making his final submission. But the evidence must be accepted: we can no longer see in Pascal the great representative of Jansenism in its full sense. That is not to say that the problem of his relation to Jansenism is definitely solved; but it seems undeniable that the essential spirit of Pascal can no longer be enclosed within the bounds of Jansenism.

We saw in a previous chapter how impossible it is to reconcile his theology with that of Port-Royal, how his appeal to the free yielding of the will really cuts across the Jansenist conception of divine grace. How far he was conscious of this divergence we cannot tell; except for one doubtful passage, there is nothing in his writings that seems to indicate such a break, and just as we protested against any attempt at making of Pascal an unconscious Protestant, so we must be careful not to exaggerate differences which he may have scarcely realised. A break from Port-Royal on matters of theological definition did not imply the condemnation of everything for which Jansenism had stood.

If to be a Jansenist were merely to be a Puritan, then Pascal remained to his dying day a Jansenist of the Jansenists. We

¹ Stewart, *The Holiness of Pascal*, p. 86.

may deplore his extreme asceticism, but we can only admit that the Puritan in Pascal tended, if anything, to increase in strength as his hold on life weakened. And this increasing moral austerity was not likely to make him change his mind as to the influence of the Jesuits in the Church. "If I had to write the *Provincial Letters* over again, I should make them yet stronger," he said on his death-bed. Jansenism as a moral force can claim Pascal to the end.

Our conclusions as to the Jansenism of Pascal will therefore depend in the long run on what we consider to be the essentials of Jansenism as a whole. If we only see in it a force of reformation within the Church, an endeavour to restore something of the purity and simplicity of the early Christian community, then we do not believe it is really possible to separate Pascal from Port-Royal. He remained in his unflinching austerity, his refusal to compromise, his fearlessness of all save his conscience and God, the highest representative of the reforming spirit of the earlier Port-Royal. If, on the other hand, we think mainly of the particular theological dogmas contained in *The Augustinus*, then we feel he was unable to be bound by their exclusivism and their hardness.

That is not to say, then, that Pascal was but an orthodox Catholic who had strayed by accident, as it were, into the Jansenist fold and left it as soon as he realised its true nature. "Pascal is ours", says Brémond,¹ "by all the best in him, by all that the *Thoughts* contain which is really original, by his witness to the person of Christ. If the heart hath its reasons which reason knoweth not, the love of Pascal for his Redeemer has a theology that overflows, that abundantly refutes the inhuman speculations of the *Writings on Grace*. . . . No one more than Pascal has convinced us of the Redeemer's having died for all men, of His reality and of His love." True, but

¹ *Op. cit.* iv. p. 416.

what does "ours" really mean? If by "ours" is meant the general tradition of Catholic Christianity, without any attempt at separating this into distinct channels or tendencies represented by outstanding leaders such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Bernard of Clairvaux, then indeed may the abbé Brémond claim Pascal for the Church. The attempts that have been made to "protestantise" Pascal have certainly failed; he condemned every form of Protestant heresy; he linked up his inner religious life with the Catholic belief in the Sacraments as essential channels of grace; devotionally and ecclesiastically he was a son of the Church. But we must not free his theology from the trammels of Jansenist predestinationism, to water it down to the easy religion represented by what Brémond calls *l'humanisme dévot*—represented at its best by the loving welcome of St. François de Sales, and at its worst by the religious system that Bossuet stigmatised as "placing cushions under the knees and elbows of sinners". "What I condemned has been condemned in Heaven," says Pascal. We cannot attenuate the sombreness of his outlook on life, his view of Christianity as the narrow way of sacrifice, not as a flower-strewn road.

If we could for a moment forget all that St. Augustine, or Thomas Aquinas, or Calvin, or Jansen ever wrote on grace and free will, and could turn back with a free mind to the Epistles of St. Paul, we should find there all the source of Pascal's theology and experience. It has been said that a Jansenist parallel could be found for every passage in the *Thoughts*. It would be truer to say that a reference could be given to a verse in the Epistles, even apart from the numerous Biblical quotations which Pascal inserted himself. There is no more predestinationism, no greater conflict between election and grace to be found in Pascal than in St. Paul. Pascal's sense of sin, his puritanism, even his stern views on love and

marriage, are but echoes of the sternness of "the chief of sinners".

But however strongly Pauline was much of Pascal's theology and outlook, the ultimate conclusion we must draw is it is vain to try and place him under the aegis of any leader. He was himself a leader and a master. He opened a new channel in French Catholicism, and remains infinitely greater than many under whose leadership some would enrol him. A man like Pascal cannot be "classified". His only leader was his Lord, his only desire to make Christians; he does not belong to a sect, nor even to his own Mother-Church, but to the whole company of those who call upon the name of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

The End

“THERE had always been in him great things to admire, but I had never noticed the great simplicity I have just witnessed: in a mind like his, it is really marvellous. I would with all my heart be in his place.”

It was of a dying Pascal that these words were spoken by a devout priest,¹ and his father confessor also said of him, “He is a child; he is humble and obedient like a child”. To the man of genius on his death-bed had come the final revelation. “Except ye be as little children, ye can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Weary of disputes, sick at heart of the cowardice of some, the obstinacy of others, stricken in his body, Pascal had abandoned all external activities in the early weeks of 1662 and retired within himself for prayer and meditation. A few months later, on the 2nd of July, he was suddenly seized with a new series of symptoms and he was to have no further respite from pain and weakness until the end. He was unable to digest any food, was sleepless through colic and suffered agonies, yet insisted in rising up and allowed no one to give him any help. As there was no sign of fever, the doctors would not admit that there was any kind of danger; but Pascal seems to have realised how wrong they were, for he

¹ Quoted in Madame Périer's *Life of Pascal*.

asked at once for the last sacraments. For some reasons that remain obscure, both the doctors and his relatives refused to allow this; they may have feared that this would make him give up the struggle, or they may have genuinely felt he was not ill enough for this; but it is a sad story—this dying man, feeling himself sinking, being steadily denied the supreme consolation his soul craved for.

His condition became obviously worse on the 8th of August, but his further request for the viaticum was refused, although he was now considered too ill to be removed to a hospital. A few days later, on the 17th, a consultation was held, owing to the terrible headache which was racking him, but all that the doctors could diagnose was neuralgia, and they would not allow him to see a priest. He collapsed during the night and was thought dead; but he revived towards morning, and a priest was at last called in. His arrival seemed to give fresh life to the dying saint: he was able to lift himself up in bed to receive the sacrament and answered distinctly the usual questions on the mysteries of the faith. Having received the viaticum, he was heard to say, "My God, never abandon me". These were his last words; the convulsions of the previous day returned immediately after and never ceased until early the next morning; on the 19th of August 1662, he passed over to the other side.

I

It is impossible to come to a strictly objective conclusion as to the value and significance of Pascal's work. The problems he raised are too fundamental to allow us to remain neutral in presence of them. To the challenge which every one of his *Thoughts* contains, we must react according to our individual experience and beliefs.

Further, in a thinker of so many standpoints, of such varied

aspects, we tend to isolate what is in harmony with our personal preferences. Some will only see the hêretic, others the ruthless logician, others the mystic; some will hail in him a master of intellectual method, while it will only be in spite of his method that he will appeal to others. Many may completely fail to be attracted by him; they will only see the "freakishness", mixed with a "certain love of throwing dust into people's eyes", which undoubtedly formed a queer mixture with his "tragic spiritual grandeur", while certain critics will reproach him for his severity, "his lack of the milk of human kindness". "We may admire Pascal, we may follow his lead, but we cannot love him" would probably be echoed by many. There is truth in all those points of view—the one essential truth they all have in common is the impossibility of ignoring Pascal.

Pascal's work is essentially a challenge to give an unequivocal answer to the claims of religion. Some problems can be ignored by the mass of mankind, and left by them to experts; but there are others which to ignore is to solve in a negative manner. To reject or to ignore religion comes to the same thing. Whatever you say or do, you are staking your life in this world and in the world to come on the existence, or non-existence of God; and in the former case, on a certain conception of the nature of God. But to ignore God, to treat Him as virtually non-existent without actually rejecting Him, is no better than a formal denial; nay, it is worse, for it is intellectually less honest and morally more degrading.

To follow Pascal we must grant him his fundamental assumption, that religion matters; and further that if Christianity be the true religion it matters more than anything else. We must share something of his awe before the infinite. Not that he was really "anxious".¹ His words, "the eternal silence of

¹ As Barrès believed (cf. *L'Angoisse de Pascal*).

those infinite spaces frightens me", express, we believe, but a casual emotion: it is truer to say that he knows God to be behind the world He has created. But he cannot treat creation as something light. He really has what the Old Testament calls the "fear of God". "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Man is but a thing of naught." This is the perpetually recurring strain in Pascal. Are we to say that he might have had a higher opinion of man, remembered more that after all man was created in God's own image and was thought worth saving at infinite cost? An it please you—but in spite of all that man claims to have achieved, a little of the Pascalian awe before the majesty of God, and of the Puritan conviction of the littleness of man would not be out of place in the representatives of a civilisation that culminated in the Great War and its aftermath of "Peace". "All we like sheep have gone astray" would serve as a motto for the world of 1927.

If Pascal provides a salutary corrective to an excessive self-complacency, do not let us fall into the error of those who will only borrow his description of human weakness and wretchedness and will not follow him on to his affirmation of redemption. After all, Pascal and Christianity only knock away the props of human pride and self-satisfaction to build up on the ruins the true foundations of human strength and happiness. Pascal never intends leaving us in a state of despair; the more searchingly accurate we feel to be his diagnosis of human weakness, sin, misery, ignorance, the more should we admit the truth of the religion which takes that very wretchedness as its basis and starting-point. Christianity rests on the assumption that "a moral disaster overtook the human race but that this disaster can be retrieved";¹ why accept that moral disaster and not the remedy? Should we recognise the moral state of

¹ Church, *Lectures on the "Pensées" of Pascal*.

mankind to be disastrous were it not for the standards introduced by Christianity itself? *

As well as a challenge, Pascal's work is a great lesson in intellectual honesty, though it may not be given in so many words. And this is the lesson, to have the courage to see you cannot have the fruit without the tree. Do not expect Christian ethics, a Christian character, Christian institutions without Christianity itself.

But it may be asked, what do you mean by Christianity? is not that the very point at issue? And the familiar controversies break out immediately about "dogmatic accretions" on to the "simple Gospel". We wonder whether Pascal would have been more amused or distressed at such expressions. He would have said there was enough mystery in the Gospel for a lifetime of philosophical study and that St. Paul's dogma could be reduced to a few statements of personal experience which the most simple could grasp. Christianity, he would have said, is the religion of Christ—*i.e.*, taking Christ at His own valuation, acting on His commands, living according to His teaching about God and man and accepting His final authority.¹

¹ "It seems possible nowadays to gather and enjoy the spirit of a doctrine without holding to that doctrine itself. The least good element in Tolstoy's success comes from that: he is a Christian who has given up all theology—and God knows how many we have of Christians of that kind! They believe that hereby they return to the Gospel; that is a complete mistake. It is indeed a long way from the Gospel to the Catholicism of to-day; but it is much further from that same Gospel to sentimental dilettantism. Whatever may be said to the contrary, there are dogmas in the Gospel and even the beginnings of a theology; otherwise Christianity could not have gripped the multitudes, who can only be attracted by clear and precise ideas; it would have cooled off and evaporated as an incense vapour. Christ meant to build a huge temple into which would enter the innumerable crowd of those who suffer. They are strange Christians, who wish to enjoy the quietness and the mystery of cathedrals by knocking down the tall pillars and the stone walls, and the whole equilibrium on which rests the heavenward urge of our dreams! They are strange poets, who are disturbed by the brutal solidity of the high oaks, and would like all the forest has to give, its coolness, its silence, its scents, everything—except the forest itself;

You are not asked for more, he would have said, but not for less either. You may not choose what you like and reject the rest; in particular you must realise that the religion of Christ is "super-natural". I am not speaking of the miraculous just now, he would have added, but of the simple yet fundamental fact that to live a Christian life involves making demands on forces outside human nature. Christianity is not a philosophy, an ethical or metaphysical system: it is living in accordance with Christ's rules for spiritual life. And you will not get the fruits of the Spirit without the Spirit itself.

No, says Pascal, be a Christian or refuse to be one, but do not think that you can pick and choose according to your fancies and vagaries, and in particular do not think you can water down your Christian beliefs to what science or psychology or the *Daily Mail* reader in the 9.15 to town will allow you to believe to-day. Have at least the courage of your own opinions.

It has often been remarked how futile it is to try and analyse Pascal as if he were a systematic philosopher, or a constructive theologian. Not indeed that he was in any sense ignorant of theology or philosophy, but that it was neither within his aim nor within his temperament to build up systems. He is, above all, an apostle, a prophet on fire with a message, and to see in him a cold logician¹ is to misunderstand him completely. He wants to convince indeed, but still more to shake out of indifference, of spiritual idleness. But while passion may be the necessary quality of the prophet, it is not very conducive to clear and logical thought or to convincing reasonableness. Passion produces intensity of desire, and intensity of desire

for the forest is the creation of an architect, as is the star-spangled heaven!" (Jaurès, *De la réalité du monde sensible*). These words would have found an answering echo in the mind of Pascal.

¹ Cold logic would have probably made of him a heretic.

creates a rigidity of outlook which may breed intolerance and fanaticism. It cannot be said that Pascal has altogether escaped this danger; but at least the complexity of his nature saved him from some of the narrowness which greater mental unity might have caused. "We must always begin", he said, "by contrasting two contrary reasons, and, after having stated a truth, we must add that we do not forget the opposite truth." The hammering of truth out of the clash of opposites is an indication of this inner complexity. He was not one man, but several—to the clash of desires corresponds the clash of ideas. He never achieved mental unity. There is, in fact, a latent and constant dualism in Pascal's thought.¹ Three religious elements mix in him: Christianity, Jansenism, Catholicism; he never is able to distinguish between the three. He would, of course, have said that there was no difference; but few would agree with that double process of identification, few would fail to find in Pascal various elements that never wholly blended. It is difficult not to see in him the essentials of a religious life entirely independent of the ecclesiastical channels of grace, fragments of Jansenist theology and phraseology with a Jansenist outlook on life, as well as religious conceptions that were the negation of Jansenist doctrine. He never really achieved the synthesis between all these elements.

To this war in the soul corresponded a war in the mind between rival methods of arriving at truth. Reason, intuition, the body—can we say he ever really harmonised their conflicting claims, gave to each its proper functions? Surely not.

His life was thus a long striving after a synthesis which he felt to be necessary, but which he ultimately failed to achieve. Through excess of passion in his quest for truth, he retained a certain stiffness which, in spite of all his denial of rationalism,

¹ Sequestra, *D'un certain dualisme dans la pensée religieuse de Pascal*.

kept him too much imprisoned in logic, not supple enough to achieve the ultimate true blending of opposites.

We do not mean, of course, that this conflict was always conscious. Pascal had won an inner certainty and peace of mind which nothing could shake; but he could never be happy until his mind had won through to the harmonising which his inner consciousness had previously obtained.

This struggle ultimately broke his body, and the breaking of his body robbed his joy of that inner genial element which is necessary to the understanding of those truths that suffering alone cannot reveal.

There is thus about him a certain restlessness, mental and physical; there is a certain final peace to which he never attained, nor ever could have, given his circumstances. He never reached his spiritual home. His faith in the Church was too shaken for him ever to be a whole-hearted Catholic, he would not remain a Jansenist, he could not become a Protestant.

Had he lived longer? . . . but no, he was too independent ever to be happy within the limits of any body.

Life was thus always a struggle to him—between rival creeds, rival systems of morals, rival ambitions. He was perpetually divided against himself. “Who can resist Pascal, save Pascal himself?” asks Suarès;¹ “only an all-powerful mind could constrain such a mind. But at the same time, only a Pascal could fear Pascal. No one went deeper into the understanding of man; no one therefore went deeper into the fear of man. That is why Pascal never leaves Christ: he knows there is nothing between the void and God, that whatever is not God can be denied.”

¹ In his *Visite à Pascal*.

II

It is rendering no service to the memory of a great man to claim for him what evidently was not his. Great as he was, Pascal did not possess every form of genius. It would be idle to pretend that he was awake to beauty in life, whether of colour, form, music, or believed that it was one of the channels of God's revelation to man. M. Filoz wrote some forty years ago an essay on Pascal's aesthetics, but he admits at the outset that Pascal knew neither the term nor the thing, and that his aesthetic conceptions are purely intellectual; beauty residing in naturalness, fitness, proportion. Whatever artistic beauty there was in his work was unconscious and unsought.

At the same time, it can be asserted that he does reveal literary art of the highest order, not only by the perfection of his composition and the beauty of his prose, but by many of the qualities which make the poet. In a very suggestive book¹ M. Chamaillard works out a curious parallel between Pascal and Lucretius. "Had he written in verse he would have been our Lucretius—greater even than Lucretius," and quotes M. Victor Faguet's phrase that "as a poet Pascal would have been the greatest poet in the world—with Homer".

That Pascal has exerted a great influence in French literature is certain. There are few great writers who do not owe much to the example of his matchless lucidity of expression, his felicitous choice of the simple yet exact word, his clarity of thought combined with depth. Classics and Romantics alike claim him as a master: rarely have order and nature, intellect and passion, objectivity and subjectivity, been more perfectly united. There are in Pascal passages which are almost the only lyrical passages in French literature before Romantic

¹ *La Poésie et les poètes devant Pascal.*

poetry; while traces of his eloquence can be found in writers as different as Bossuet, Voltaire, Chateaubriand, and Anatole France.

It is possible, however, to over-estimate the real influence of Pascal. To say, as M. Giraud does, that "had Pascal not lived, the inner and moral history of France would have followed a different course" is, we believe, a serious and misleading exaggeration. It is open to no one, of course, to deny the probability of Pascal having had a determining effect on the spiritual history of many individuals; but it must be admitted (and this M. Giraud does not deny) that Pascal's rigidity and austerity—not to say harshness—have alienated many possible converts. If M. Hatzfeld was brought from Judaism to Christianity by the *Thoughts*, M. Havet was turned by his study of Pascal from a vague Deism to a complete agnosticism.

It is only of recent years that Pascal's real work as an apologist has begun; there is no doubt that he has played a very considerable part in the religious revival of the last thirty years. His influence has been helped in this respect by the work of M. Bergson; it is unnecessary to return to the connection existing between the philosophy of intuition and the "appeal to the heart".

Even here, however, it is possible to exaggerate Pascal's influence, or rather, to ignore its true nature. His influence lay more, we believe, in his methods of presenting religion than in his conceptions as to the fundamental question of the ultimate nature of religion and the religious life; we would be inclined to say that on the whole Pascal's religious outlook is essentially different from that of most religiously-minded Frenchmen, that the prevailing religious development of the French has been along different lines from his, and that truly Pascalian souls have been few.

What exactly do we mean by a "Pascalian outlook"? We

mean two things—firstly, a keen sense of the need for a strictly personal religion, based on personal responsibility and personal growth in grace—as opposed to any view of religion as mainly a social phenomenon; and secondly, a strict insistence on the essentially moral and ethical character of the Christian life.

Now, if our earlier analysis be true, the general trend of French religious life has been precisely the other way. The tendency has been to make the individual sacrifice the promptings of the individual conscience to a line of action which seemed less anti-social; it has involved, in a striking phrase, “the refusal of a categorical imperative, of any compelling, transcendent affirmation, liable to upset, to force us to leave behind us the painfully acquired gains either of thought or of social organisation”.¹

We saw how in the sixteenth century individuals ignored the real issues of the Reformation for fear of jeopardising a painfully acquired political unity; how Jansenism and Protestantism were uprooted in the next century for the same reason; how, time and time again since, new ideas were judged by their social effects rather than by their intrinsic truth. Or may we say that the French mind is naturally pragmatic, and makes social result the criterion of final truth? Either point of view is the negation of the Pascalian attitude, which is precisely the whole-hearted acceptance of a categorical imperative, that religion is an end in itself, the only ultimate end, and must make man and the world conform to it instead of claiming it as a handmaid of this or that passing system.

In the same way, France has never accepted the puritanism of a Pascal as an inherent element of her religious outlook. Our belief that this refusal has been attended by a great moral loss may be challenged, but it is certain that no Christian may

¹ Archambault, *Jeunes Maîtres*, p. 129.

claim Pascal as his spiritual guide who rejects the Pascalian relation of ethics to religion.¹

The fact is, however much we may shrink from the conclusion, that Pascal really failed in his conscious task. Aghast at certain tendencies at work within the Church of his day, at the growing subordination of religious to political and social issues, and at the increasing indifference to spiritual problems, he tried, in common with some others, to raise a cry of alarm. Both the public authorities and the public opinion of the time ridiculed the alarm, refused to face the danger, and finally crushed those who would not keep silent. Pascal's literary and philosophical genius saved his work from oblivion, and some strong souls found in him a spiritual guide; but even religious France remained indifferent to the intensity of his moral appeal, and his was for many years *vox clamantis in deserto*. Even the recent striking revival of Pascalian studies shows a tendency to fasten on side-issues, rather than face the supreme issues that Pascal raised.² Pascal may be coming into his own as writer and thinker, but scarcely yet as prophet or apostle. And yet this was the only ambition of the real Pascal.

"There are but three kinds of books which tend to the edification of the Church and the faithful: the first are those of the Holy Scriptures, the second of the Councils and the Fathers, the third are those of the men of God who have poured out their hearts before him in their writings."³ Among such men of God we may number Blaise Pascal.

¹ It is staggering, for instance, to read under the pen of Stendhal: "Of all writers, Pascal is the one whom I most resemble by the soul"—Stendhal, the incarnation of complacent egoism, for whom moral considerations are simply non-existent! This is an extreme case, of course, but one may ask the question whether there be not a great deal of misapprehension or self-deception in the Pascal cult.

² Judging at least from the great mass of recent publications on Pascal. Of these two only seem to us to make for fundamentals, Dr. Stewart's *Holiness of Pascal*, and the lectures on Pascal organised in Paris by *Foi et Vie* in the winter of 1912.

³ St. Cyran.

APPENDIX I

Pascal and Port-Royal

IT may not be out of place to trace briefly the evolution that has taken place in recent years over Pascal's relations to Jansenism and to Port-Royal.

For about two centuries after his death Pascal was always unquestioningly accepted as the foremost representative of Jansenism. This was the idea he was supposed to have given during his lifetime; it had been sedulously fostered by Port-Royal, anxious to keep the prestige given by its distinguished alumnus; and orthodox Catholicism saw no reason to question this view. Not only so, but many went further and hailed in Pascal a virtual heretic, an unconscious protestant,¹ in spite of his vehement affirmations to the contrary. (This tendency, for instance, is the weakness—perhaps the only weakness—of Vinet as a Pascalian critic.)

A second stage was reached when, in the late nineteenth century, some critics began to discern an inner contradiction between Pascal's external Jansenism and his theology. This

¹ Not always unconscious even. Ste. Beuve quotes (*Port-Royal*, ii. 196) a statement from a seventeenth-century *Journey to Switzerland* to the effect that St. Cyran and Pascal were both Protestants who had kept their Protestantism well hidden. "If you study the proofs M. Pascal puts forward to convince atheists, and his silence on the chief points of the Roman religion, you will easily conclude that he is not far from the Kingdom of God." Leibnitz affirmed, on the other side, that "M. Pascal had his mind full of the prejudices of Rome" (Letter to T. Brunet, Hatzfeld's *Pascal*, p. 277).

change was really made possible by the re-establishment of the exact text of the *Thoughts*, revealing the mutilations caused in the text by Port-Royal, anxious to tone down what might seem scarcely in accordance with the best Jansenist tradition; but it was the inevitable result of any really open-minded study of the *Thoughts*—which work, we may add, had remained unopened on most shelves for the main part of two centuries; for, apart from Voltaire's denunciations, Pascalian criticism was virtually non-existent until the work of Cousin and Faugère.

This querying as to Pascal's theological position was mainly the work of Guthlin and Hatzfeld; the latter particularly brought out with great force the way in which Pascal's doctrine was "the negation of Jansenist heresy", and "incompatible with Jansenist errors" as to the helplessness of human effort;¹ while the abbé Guthlin declared² that "Pascal was not a Jansenist in the theological sense of the term". But while this inner contradiction was beginning to be recognised, Pascal's outward adhesion to the sect was never questioned. His non-Jansenism, which some denied, was held to be unconscious, and to everybody he formally remained a Port-Royalist.

The third stage was reached when some critics began to wonder whether Pascal could really have remained unconscious of this inner contradiction. From the mere logic of the thing it seemed impossible that a clear thinker such as he should have failed to realise this clash, and it was this which drove critics back to the careful study of the last months of his life.

There had always been something of a mystery about Pascal's death-bed. M. Beurrier, the priest who had attended him in his last weeks, was not a Jansenist friend, but his parish priest, the vicar of St. Etienne-du-Mont, and this selection had always excited some wonder in his circle. He had in fact scarcely passed away when a rumour went round to the effect

¹ Hatzfeld, p. 276.

² Introduction to an edition of the *Thoughts*.

that he had actually disavowed Jansenism. Although denied by Port-Royal, these rumours were so persistent that in January 1665 the Archbishop of Paris sent for M. Beurrier and asked him if it was true that Pascal had died without the sacraments, or, if not, why he had given the sacraments to a heretic. Upon which Beurrier declared that on the contrary Pascal had expressed his condemnation of Port-Royal "excesses" in the matters of Grace, and professed the most orthodox sentiments and perfect submission to the Church and to the Pope; upon which Beurrier had felt no difficulty about giving him the sacraments and absolution.

Beurrier's declaration was a bombshell in the Jansenist camp. Attempts were made to explain it away, on the ground that he had misunderstood Pascal, that he was no theologian, and did not really grasp what the controversies were about. The actual disagreements of Pascal with Port-Royal were minimised, or even denied; but the main line of defence was the discrediting of Beurrier as a dependable witness. As it was patently impossible to accuse him of deliberate falsehood (he had too great a reputation for saintliness), efforts were made to show him as a "good" man but quite unreliable intellectually. Madame Périer tried immediately (in 1665) to get him to withdraw his statement, but he apparently did not reply to her letter.

After some four years of pamphlet warfare, the leaders of Port-Royal decided to publish at last Pascal's posthumous papers—the *Thoughts*. The Archbishop of Paris asked them to put M. Beurrier's statement in the preface; they were unwilling to refuse point-blank, but yet more unwilling to print such a document, and finally did not do so. To the Archbishop's protest, with the request that Beurrier's statement should appear in subsequent editions, M. Périer (Pascal's brother-in-law) replied in embarrassed tones that "M. Pascal's

sentiments were so universally known to be orthodox and Catholic, particularly to those who saw him during his last illness, and the purity of his faith appeared so clearly in all he left, that no one could doubt it, and it was therefore unnecessary to have any proof to that effect. For that reason, and for others which could only be expressed by word of mouth", it was not proposed to act on the Archbishop's request (March 1670).

A few months later the Archbishop died. Upon this Périer went to see M. Beurrier and obtained from him a letter to the effect that judging from later information received as to Pascal's views concerning the subject at issue at the time of his death, he might have been mistaken as to the meaning of Pascal's words; and that he regretted ever having made the declaration asked for by the Archbishop.

It was probably for the sake of peace that Beurrier made this apparent withdrawal. We say "apparent" because it does not seem to have really satisfied Jansenist circles. It put an end to the debate for the time being, but not definitely enough for Port-Royal to feel free to print Madame Périer's life of Pascal as a preface to further editions of the *Thoughts*, owing to its uncompromising affirmation of Pascal's faithfulness to Jansenism. Further, a second letter from Beurrier, to Madame Périer's son, denying a report that Pascal had ever come to his house, stated that all he had ever said, and affirmed in his letter to Madame Périer, was that "Pascal had died as a very good Catholic, after having received the Sacraments, and had had infinite patience and a great submission to the Church and to our Holy Father, the Pope, and that for the two years that preceded his death he had determined to retire from the world and to work at his salvation and against atheists".

M. Jovy also lays much stress on the fact that both those letters are only known to us through Jansenist sources, and that there is no guarantee as to the accuracy of their wording,

which may well have been altered *ad majorem Portus Regii gloriam*, our actual text being published as late as 1711, many years after Beurrier's death, when no correction could be demanded. Personally, we think M. Jovy is a little too hard on Port-Royal, and that M. Beurrier's letters may be accepted as they stand; but it must be admitted that some colour may be given to the suggestion of an alteration in the documents by Arnauld's statement to Louis Périer in 1688, that "the old man whose declaration you *dare* not produce as long as he lives cannot live long".

Further, it may be asked whether the "withdrawal" be anything more than a polite and quite vague admission of a "possible" mistake, an admission made to put an end to an unedifying polemic around the memory of a great man. It must also be noted that the "mistake" Beurrier admits was only as to the precise nature of the theological dispute, not as to the final orthodoxy of Pascal.

When at the end of 1684 (twenty-two years after his death) Madame Périer's *Life of Pascal* appeared, it was found to be absolutely silent concerning the disputes which had arisen between Pascal and Port-Royal, the alleged recantation and Beurrier's statements, the one allusion to Beurrier being a very unguarded reference to the high esteem in which he was held by his penitent. Further, the publication only took place in order to forestall the appearance of an unauthorised *Life*, which was said to be "full of calumnies" concerning Pascal. In the same year, owing to the persistence of recantation rumours (and thirteen years after Beurrier's "withdrawal") Madame Périer asked several of Pascal's closest friends to testify to his perfect Jansenism—which, of course, they did, although their testimony could scarcely be held to come from impartial and independent witnesses! It may be asked why Madame Périer had not given *her* testimony in the *Life*. As

late as 1701, in fact, Marguerite Périer was still asking for more light, from a M. Coquebert, who was said to have received from Beurrier's own mouth a full account of Pascal's last days. But M. Coquebert could say nothing definite; after the fullest inquiries he found he could add nothing to former statements, and regretted he was not more fully informed.

There the matter remained for over 200 years, until in 1911, M. Jovy unearthed in a Paris Public Library (La Bibliothèque Ste Geneviève) a manuscript which proved to be the original copy of M. Beurrier's own *Memoirs*. This document, from which we have previously quoted, is an emphatic re-assertion of his first statement to the Archbishop, as to Pascal's withdrawal from theological disputes, in which he might have erred by saying too much or too little, and as to his perfect submission on those questions to the voice of the Church, and to the Pope, Christ's vicar. Beurrier declares having confirmed all this before the Archbishop; he goes on to say that this statement gave rise to many comments; that he was asked by many whether he had correctly interpreted Pascal's views, by others whether he had not misunderstood them and whether they were not capable of another interpretation; and that his one reply to all was that they could give any interpretation they liked to his statement—*quod scripsi, scripsi*. He would give no further replies of any kind to anybody.

Beurrier makes no allusion to his letter to Madame Périer of 1671, but the above statement may have been written before that date. His account contains one error: the "retreat" he alludes to¹ must have been that of the end of 1661, not that of 1659—*i.e.*, six months, not two years before Pascal's death. We know that the 1659 retreat was not final, that Pascal returned one last time, to scientific research, and was drawn into theological disputes during the summer of 1661.

¹ See p. 184.

If we may admit, however, the general accuracy and trustworthiness of Beurrier, the matter is definitely settled: Pascal died reconciled to the Church. To hold the other view, it is necessary to go back to Port-Royal tactics of 1665 and discredit Beurrier. This has been tried; M. Gazier speaks of Beurrier's failing memory, of his being in his second childhood, of the inner contradictions of his *Memoirs*; and it is open to anybody to adhere to that standpoint, since the final proof is impossible.

We would point out, however, in conclusion—

1. That all contemporary evidence contradictory to Beurrier's assertions are of Jansenist (*i.e.* of interested) sources, whereas Beurrier is admitted by all to have been a "non-party" man, entirely immersed in his parish work, and with no axe to grind.

2. That virtually all the *younger* generation of Pascalian critics (*i.e.* those who were not already wedded to another view they found it impossible to abandon) have admitted the finality of Beurrier's statement and the conclusions to be drawn therefrom.

3. That this standpoint clears up the kind of mystery which surrounded Pascal's last days, and is, we believe, more in harmony with the evolution of Pascal's own mind as shown in the *Thoughts*.

4. That as Pascal certainly *wished* to die as a faithful Catholic, since he ardently desired to receive the sacrament, it is not of vital interest to know exactly what terms were thought by Beurrier to be an adequate expression of orthodox Catholicism.

APPENDIX II

Bibliography

OF French works on Pascal there is no end, and in a book for English readers we do not propose giving a list of those of which we have made use. The footnote references will have indicated the most important. We need only say that Professor Chevalier's study (Alcan, Paris, 1923) is the most complete one-volume work on Pascal's message, and his edition of the *Thoughts* (Gabalda, Paris, 2 vols., 1925) the most useful to the student. Professor Strowski's *Pascal et son temps* (Plon-Nourrit, Paris, 3 vols., 1911) is the most detailed account, not only of Pascal's life, but also, chiefly perhaps, of the intellectual and religious background of his times; and M. Giraud's *Vie héroïque de Blaise Pascal* (1924) the most readable, and not uncritical, biographical sketch.

A. ENGLISH EDITIONS OF PASCAL'S WORKS

1. *Les Provinciales*. The earliest translation appeared in 1657, under the title of: "The Mystery of Jesuitism discovered in certain Letters written upon the occasion of the present difficulties in Sorbonne between Jansenists and Molinists". This was reprinted in 1658 and 1679. An English answer was published in 1659. There were several later translations; that of M'Crie (1847) is the one used in the modern "Temple Classics"

Of English editions of the French text, the most scholarly is that of Dr. H. F. Stewart (Manchester University Press, 1920).

2. *Les Pensées* and other miscellaneous works.

In 1688 Joseph Walker published a translation of the *Thoughts* under the following title:

Monsieur Pascall's *Thoughts, Meditations, and Prayers*, touching Matters moral and divine, as they were found in his papers after his death. Together with a Discourse on the Proofs of the Truth of the Books of Moses. And a Treatise, wherein is made to appear that there are Demonstrations of a different Nature, but as certain as those of Geometry, and that such may be given of the Christian Religion.

This was dedicated to "Robert Boyle, Esq., a member of the Royal Society", the translator having "observed a parity there is in certain things between your Honour and our Author. M. Pascal was nobly descended, and a great lover of virtue and learning from his infancy. Everybody knows, Sir, you eminently enjoy those advantages. . . . He was called a Christian Philosopher and Mathematician. . . . M. Pascal was eminently Charitable, Pious and Exemplary in his Morals, hating and reproving Vice in himself and others, wherein he surpassed most of the clergy. . . . Those who are indifferent in this regard, let such tremble, for a M. Pascal and a M. Boyle will rise up in judgment and condemn them."

Mr. Walker then goes on to observe that "it is very seldom such virtues as were in him are found in those of the Communion wherein he lived", and comments on "his great purity of Life and Zeal, according to what he could discern through the mists of superstition"! He adds his belief that "there are

many Strokes and Alterations made by other Hands through that which some would call *Pia Fraus*".

Another translation, Kennet's, went through three editions, in 1704, 1727, 1741. Several others followed, all based on the Port-Royal text. Then in 1849 Pearce published a revised translation, from the text of Faugère's corrected version. Later, in 1884, came Paul's translation of Molinier's edition; this was used for Bohn's Reprint of the *Thoughts* in the "Hundred Best Books" Series. The most modern edition is that of W. F. Trotter (Dent, 1904); it is an exact version of Brunsvicg's students' edition, which is still the edition usually referred to in any quoting of the *Thoughts*, and is therefore virtually indispensable, in either French or English.

There are also several Selections from Pascal's works; we may notice that by Jerram in the "Library of Devotion" (Methuen, 1901), and that by Kauffmann (Cambridge Press, 1908).

B. ENGLISH BOOKS ON PASCAL

BEARD.—*Port-Royal* (1861)—a good biographical sketch of Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal, with a full account of the history of the text of the *Thoughts* up to 1860. The author believes that "every religious thought which Pascal has left is intertwined with the theology which St. Cyran imposed on the community".

BOUTROUX.—*Pascal* (translated by E. M. Creak, 1902). A masterly short study.

CHURCH.—*Pascal and other Sermons* (1895), *The Pensées of Blaise Pascal* (St. James' Lectures, 1875).

CLARK.—*Pascal and the Port-Royalists* ("World's Epoch-Makers," 1902)—a useful sketch, from the same standpoint as Beard. It contains a good account of the history of Port-Royal after Pascal.

- DUCLAUX.—*The French Ideal*: Pascal, Fénelon, etc. (1911).
Portrait of Pascal (1927), an attractive biographical sketch, depicting the man rather than the thinker. The writer is apt to give her imagination more freedom than a critical examination of the evidence would warrant.
- GAMBLE.—*A Study in Pascal*: three lectures (1907).
- GOULBURN.—*Pascal* (Y.M.C.A. Lectures, 1860).
- JORDAN.—*Blaise Pascal*: a study in religious psychology (1909).
A short and interesting essay, in spite of the writer's lack of sympathy with Pascal's religion. ("Though his end was of such a character that the story of it may induce a fine contempt, there is in his life a nobleness very courageous and very high.")
- MORRIS.—*The Divinity of Our Lord*, from Pascal; an exposition of a fragment of Pascalian theology (1898).
- ST. CYRES.—*Pascal* (1907), a very full biography in which the trees are apt to make one lose sight of the wood.
- STEWART.—*The Holiness of Pascal* (*Hulsean Lectures*, Cambridge, 1915). Dr. Stewart's is, we believe, the only English work on Pascal to have achieved the honour of translation into French. It is by far the most penetrating study we know of Pascal's religious life.
- TULLOCH.—*Pascal*, an account of his life and writings ("Foreign Classics for English Readers", 1878).
- WILLIAMS.—*Pascal, Newman, Loisy, and the Catholic Church* (1906).

INDEX

- Aquinas, St. Thomas, his doctrine of grace, 27, 89, 189
- Arnauld, Antoine (the elder), 29, 31
- Arnauld, Antoine (the younger, "le grand Arnauld"), 37, 53, 79 *et sqq.*, 178 *et sqq.*
- Arnauld, Mother Angélique, Abbess of Port-Royal, 29, 31, 178
- Augustine, St., doctrine of grace and predestination, 26, 27, 110, 189
- Augustinus, The* (Jansen's treatise), 34, 37, 52, 180, 188
- Bergson, M., points of contact between him and Pascal, 142, 200
- Beurrier, Abbé, account of Pascal's last days, 167, 204 *et sqq.*
- Bremond, Abbé, quoted, 32-34, 125, 141, 146, 189
- Calvin, comparison with Pascal, 11, 79, 98, 142, 186, 188-189
- Charron, Pierre, sceptical teaching, 19, 112
- Chevalier, Professor, quoted, 38, 109, 127, 129
- Descartes, rationalism, 15, 17, 18; views on the vacuum, 56, 57; influence on Pascal, 112, 135, 148
- Du Vair, apostle of Neo-Stoicism (which also see), 16, 17, 30; read by Pascal, 112
- Epictetus, widespread influence in seventeenth century, 16, 25; studied by Pascal, 50, 66-69
- Fermat, mathematician and friend of Pascal, 64, 65, 170
- Filleau de la Chaise, draft of Pascal's apologetic discourse, 106, 108, 109, 114
- Giraud, M. Victor, quoted, 66, 76, 133, 139, 143, 200
- Grace, doctrines of, 26-28, 36-37, 79 *et sqq.*
- Jansen, Bishop of Ypres, 33, 52-55, 79, 144-149, 180-189
- Luther, comparison with Pascal, 142, 186
- Méré and Miton, "worldly" friends of Pascal, 61, 62
- Methodism, comparison with Jansenism, 34, 99
- Molina, Jesuit theologian, his influence, 27, 79 *et sqq.*
- Montaigne, influence of the "Essais," 17, 19, 20, 30; read by Pascal, 66-69, 112, 135
- Neo-Stoicism, widespread in seventeenth century, 16, 20, 31, 50 (*see also* Epictetus and du Vair)
- Nicole, 105, 178
- Noel, Father, controversy with Pascal, 57

- Pascal, Blaise : born at Clermont-Ferrand, 43 ; early scientific genius, 44 ; moves to Paris, 46 ; to Rouen, 48 ; converted to Jansenism, 52 *et sqq.* ; returns to Paris, 55 ; experiments as to the vacuum, 56-58 ; "worldly" period, 60-64 ; second conversion, 65 *et sqq.* ; writes the "Provinciales," 79 *et sqq.* ; prepares an *Apology* of Christianity, 105 *et sqq.* ; connection of *Thoughts* with the *Apology*, 107-112 ; basis of apologetic system, 113 *et sqq.* ; theory of "three orders," 130 ; alleged scepticism, 139 ; how far a Jansenist in thought, 144-148 ; value of *Apology*, 148-150 ; personal devotion to Christ, 154 ; views on marriage, 156 ; asceticism, 159 ; retirement from the world, 165 ; abandons mathematics, 169 ; political writings, 171 ; invents the omnibus, 175 ; controversies with Port-Royal, 178 *et sqq.*, 204-209 ; last illness, 191 ; general estimate of work, 192 *et sqq.*
- Pascal, Etienne (father of Pascal), 43, 44, 48 ; converted to Jansenism, 52 ; death, 58
- Pascal, Gilberte (Madame Périer, elder sister of Pascal), 46, 53, 55, 58 ; her biography of Pascal, 59, 63, 166-167, 171, 206
- Pascal, Jacqueline (younger sister of Pascal), 46, 47, 54, 56, 58 ; retires to Port-Royal, 59 ; attitude on formulary, 181 ; death, 183
- Péguy, Charles, quoted, 68, 164
- Pelagius, doctrine of grace, 24, 27
- Périer, Etienne (nephew of Pascal), 106, 111, 157, 206
- Périer, Florin (brother-in-law of Pascal), 54, 56
- Périer, Marguerite (niece of Pascal), 110
- Port-Royal, Abbey of : foundation, 29 ; becomes centre of Jansenism, 30 *et sqq.* ; receives Pascal, 74-76 ; conflict with Jesuits, 79 *et sqq.* ; divided as to submission to anti-Jansenist measures, 178 *et sqq.* ; quarrel with Pascal, 180 *et sqq.*
- Puritanism compared with Jansenism, 29, 99, 144, 187
- Richelieu, Cardinal, centralisation policy, 3-7, 19 ; persecutes Port-Royal, 31 ; relations with Pascal family, 46-47
- Roannez, Duc de, 62, 106
- Sacy, M. de, 68, 74, 178
- Ste Beuve, quoted, 35, 105, 163, 203
- St. Cyran, Abbé de, influence on Port-Royal, 30 *et sqq.* ; on Pascal, 58, 143 ; quoted, 200
- St. Cyres, Viscount, quoted, 14, 46, 57, 59, 62, 150
- Singlin, Abbé, 73, 178
- Stewart, Dr. H. F., quoted, 109, 137, 187, 202
- Strowski, Professor, quoted, 11, 15, 19, 20, 45, 97, 144
- Torricelli, vacuum experiment, 56-57
- Trent, Council of, 20, 24, 27
- Vinet, Alexandre, quoted, 134, 139, 141 ; value as a critic of Pascal, 203
- Wesley, John, compared with Pascal, 159

